

**The Ramakrishna Mission  
Institute of Culture Library**

**Presented by**

**Dr. Baridbaran Mukerji**

**RMICL-8**

**2**

**11942**











LETTERS

TO

FRIENDS AT HOME

FROM

JUNE 1842, to MAY 1843.

*BY AN IDLER.*

CALCUTTA:

PUBLISHED AT THE STAR PRESS.

M.DCCC.XLIII.

R.M. LIBRARY	
Acc.	11942
Class No.	957.75
Date:	26.8.68
St. Card	A.M.
Class	✓
Cat.	✓
Bk. Card	✓
Checked	

## **Dedication.**

TO

**LORD ELLENBOROUGH,**

GOVERNOR GENERAL OF INDIA.

MY LORD,

. When these Letters were commenced I stated there would be nothing of a private character about them : I therefore consider myself at liberty to deal with them as I please ; but dedicating them to your Lordship without permission, it is necessary I should say a word or two in explanation.

In running through them I find your Lordship does the same, or very nearly so. In one written to a lady Lord Ellenborough's name does not appear; in all the others his sayings and doings form a prominent topic. But for your Lordship much of them would never have been written: to whom then could they be more properly dedicated?

That I have not asked permission was from no fear it would not be cheerfully granted, but because on so small a matter I did not feel justified in troubling a man, with the cares of an empire upon him, expanding against his will; and whose mind, sensitively alive to the blessings of peace, has been rudely agitated by distant war and domestic broils.

The times are now changed, The alarming conspiracy of the Hill tribes at Subathoo was happily discovered, and strangled in the conception. Your Lordship's refractory sister-in-law, the lady of Khytul, has been dismayed; Bundelcund, Gwalior, and the Punjaub are just now warlike but in rumour; while in Scinde there is no

enemy in the field, and though one is in camp that appears powerful enough to annihilate an army, it is satisfactory to know that if our gallant soldiers are swept away so have been slavery and transit duties.

A Dedication, My Lord, is not unusually a vehicle for praise, and I think it should be so : there is much affectation in disavowing an intention to be complimentary. If a man be not deserving eulogy, why should he be placed in such a page ? and if his deserts be great, why should they not be acknowledged ? It is a pleasant task to generous minds to do justice to those of a superior order ; and though homage from equal intellects is the most gratifying tribute exalted merit can receive, a truly great man will never deny a harmless privilege that gives pleasure to an inferior. It is with this view of our relative positions that I venture to write, and do it in the conviction that your Lordship will graciously condescend to listen.

My Lord, I have your own warrant for the assertion that your Lordship is a man of no ordinary stamp ; for did you not say

the other evening, that the state of affairs when you entered upon the government of this empire might have appalled the stoutest mind. You have not been appalled; and if the public was alarmed, as it was natural it should be on your accession, it can at least reflect with gratitude that matters are no worse.

India is said to have been your Lordship's ambition, yet I believe when it was offered you were coy enough: you were, however, won to undertake the government of this country, and unless the game of spoliation we teach be played by others you promise to leave it more vast than you found it. You came, you saw, and your predecessor's generals conquered; but if not quite Cæsar in Afghanistan, you lost little time in becoming Seizer of Scinde.

For the promptness, decision and energy with which you prolonged the former war, your Lordship has received the thanks of Parliament: the sacrifice of that dearly cherished pacific policy to which you became immediately after

voluntarily pledged, for some great necessity not yet known, will no doubt obtain you an Earldom, if it does not procure you that higher office to which you mysteriously alluded at the Barrackpore supper, or lose you your present one.

India already owes you much, My Lord, in addition to the glory achieved by your permission. During your administration an Act for the mitigation of slavery has been passed, which was decided upon before you came, and another for the appointment of Uncovenanted Deputy Magistrates, which if you did not originate you did not oppose. You have personally inspected a Convent at Agra, complimented the Lady Abbess, and munificently presented her with Rs. 100 : since your return to Calcutta you have paid a visit to a similar institution and given it your warmest praise. You have shewn us that a Governor General can do without a Council, and that a Council can do without a Governor General, from which we may reasonably hope that the



one or the other will be speedily abolished. You have devised a magnificent system of provincial Police which has only one drawback, that it cannot be carried into effect; and you have given such encouragement to the completion of the Ganges Canal, that it is not unreasonable to suppose it may be completed within the present century. But the crowning act of your civil administration has been that admirable Finance Committee, which will save the country nobody knows how much.

If then, My Lord, you are universally popular, who shall say you have not deserved the incense of praise offered on all sides, without any admixture of flattery, “the food of courts.”

If that popularity had needed rivetting, your Lordship’s late Notification that you have abolished the very ridiculous and troublesome custom of granting audiences would have accomplished it. The impartiality shown between these intrusions, whether on public or private affairs, is beyond all praise.

But it is as the friend of the Army your Lordship stands most prominently forward. Your avowed predilections inclined you towards the red-coats, and for their gallant services to the State you have the strongest personal reasons to be thankful. You have evinced your gratitude to the body of the army by feasting them with sweetmeats, and to many meritorious officers you have given appointments. What boon you are to procure in which all may share has not yet transpired, secrecy in all things being your Lordship's policy and pride.

It has to be sure been said that Majors Outram, Macgregor, Mackeson and others, including the Afghan prisoners and hostages, and the Sagur Politicals, are extremely ill-used men, but this has merely been the complaint of that licentious Press which your Lordship happily never reads, though I am aware you are not among those dullards alluded to by JUNIUS, "who conceive that our Newspapers are no restraint upon bad men, or impediments to the execution of bad measures."

I ought not to omit noticing your appointment of Major Broadfoot to the Tenasserim provinces, and of Colonel Butterworth, C. B. to the government of the Straits. The solicitude for the health of Mr. Blundell, which induced you to insist on his taking his furlough when he did not want it, and to supersede him at Singapore, whereby these two vacancies were created, must have endeared your Lordship to the Civil Service.

The Marine alone may choose to be offended with your Lordship for putting a soldier at the head of that body. It was a novel idea, but it was not your own. I am told its paternity rests with the Deputy Governor of Bengal. It was one, however, that could not but be acceptable to your Lordship; and if it be true that it suggested to your Lordship the further military patronage that would be secured by placing superannuated Conductors in charge of our Pilot Brigs, all will confess how happily the idea has been worked out.

I have trespassed, My Lord, somewhat beyond the bounds of a Dedication; my

theme must be my apology. I am fully aware, that I have done it very imperfect justice, but it is not easy to panegyricize a man of singular eminence without trying his modesty and patience. I shall be satisfied if I have not been fulsome.

Your Lordship returns to Barrackpore a modern Cincinnatus, to put off the paraphernalia of your great office and turn country gentleman. That your Lordship might live and die in that harmless position should be the prayer of all who know you.

I am,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's faithful observer, and

AN IDLER.

AUGUST 18TH, 1843.



## PREFACE.

The following letters have appeared in the *Overland Calcutta Star*. They were commenced in the belief that many topics might be thrown together in the shape of familiar correspondence which must otherwise have been omitted, from the impossibility of finding room for suitable departments for all, in a Journal professing to give in one issue the news of the month.

A summary might have accomplished more, but that would have excluded comment, and if it had been somewhat fuller it would also have been more formal.

The letters are reprinted without alteration or addition ; and the apology for a defective style is, that they were sent to press without time for any other correction than of compositors' blunders, having, with one exception, been written the day before the departure of each Mail. They are collected in a volume simply because they form a slight record of some of the principal events that occupied public attention during the period they embrace.







## Letters to Friends at Home.

---

MY DEAR MACKENZIE.

*Calcutta, 3rd June, 1842.*

I do not pretend to insinuate that I have ever followed the example of the most distinguished men and kept a diary, unless it was for about a year after leaving school, when my object was to persuade myself I was a great man while not very much more than a little boy. And if I had, I will not affect to say that I should have had the magnanimity to keep my 'wise saws' for my own solitary contemplation. What such a course gains in humility it loses in selfishness. I am no Alfred carrying memorandum leaves in my bosom, but now and then I note down a fact or a reflection for my own satisfaction, and for the satisfaction (if they are capable of affording any) of those to whom they may be submitted. These—what shall I call them, crudities perhaps at best, are valuable materials for friendly letters. No man desires his equal to talk to him as if he felt his capability to

instruct, and letters are simply conversations in ink. Cowper likens them to apparitions ; not a bad idea, since if ingeniously written they bring the writer vividly within the circle from which he is perhaps separated by half the world. There are men who do not thus allow themselves to be visible to all eyes, until they have actually become incorporeal. Their letters are sealed to the mass until death has shaken his pouncet-box over the writers and dried them up, and when opened they generally give us much more of the author than the man. They were written with the conviction that some literary executor would give—no, sell them to the world, and, oh ! vanity of vanities, that looks for the praise of surface worms while worms below are feasting on his rottenness, the writer affects a dozen virtues he never was on speaking terms with in his life time ! Don't mistake me ; I say not this of all posthumously published letters, but the great majority bear internal evidence of being intended for the world rather than for the party to whom they are ostensibly addressed. I have no ambition of posthumous fame in this line : I am content to write a letter that gratifies the receiver, and all the return I desire is a ready reply. If you are curious to know why I commence a correspondence which all who run may

read, instead of entrusting it to the guardianship of wax, wafers, or gum as heretofore, (and some gentlemen and ladies are so studiously mysterious that they employ all three) my reply is, that I do not intend to write any secrets, not a line that the world is not as welcome to as your own family, and that the facility of multiplying copies afforded by the press may enable me to save you a good deal of trouble, since you tell me that there are a dozen in the family, and some out of it, always anxious to secure an early perusal of my favours. Believe me I should have attributed this to the right cause had you not mentioned it. When you say that late events in India have created an extraordinary sensation in the public mind, and that persons of all classes seek most eagerly for the latest intelligence from the East, you only tell me what the public press has affirmed, and what has been strongly corroborated to me during the last year or two by parties returning hither from England. It was this that originated the idea of writing a series of letters for publication. I thought of it a year ago, and now I am about to carry it into execution.

You are aware that the 'Overlands' are of modern date: you, and all who are interested in Indian matters—and that we have agreed is every-

body—must have found them a luxury, bringing together as they do in one view the news of the month. As a mere speculation, though I do not believe they were started as such, they must have been very successful. The *Bombay Times* has by far the best, as the London Journals have discovered. Some short time back the Editor mentioned that he had despatched upwards of 2000, which I need not tell you, who have spent so many years in this country, is a very large circulation for an Indian journal. The *Englishman's* and the *Hurkaru's* are in merit much upon a par, and only not as good as they might be because the parties concerned appear to give themselves no trouble in their preparation. I believe the former has despatched as many as 1200 of a month. The sale of the latter I have never heard. The *Calcutta Star* has now, as you will see, put an opposition on the road: such it necessarily must be to some extent, though the simple reason for starting it has been, that a daily newspaper establishment is not complete without one, the majority making the rule that such a thing should be. This then is the vehicle in which I shall send you or some one of the family a monthly packet, and if you like to reply through a similar channel, I will guarantee the amusement, and I will say instruction, you

will afford to a large circle. But you may not find such a channel, and I know you are too old an author to print at your own expense. Very well then, write as heretofore; understanding that I don't mean you are to hieroglyphicize a sheet of paper, but that you are to use a pen with the respect due to so important an engine. If you are to write for publication, your letters, scrawled as the past have been, will lose one of their attractions. Don't smile, but it has generally taken a leisure five or ten minutes half a dozen times in the course of a month to get at the meaning of some of your extraordinary pot-hookings. It is rather a labour of love than a love of labour that makes the attraction of which I have spoken:—to have to decipher a lawyer's letter would be excruciating, but the rascals always write so plagiarily clear for their six and eight pence, or three and four pence even, that one has no excuse for not answering it off-hand, though it may supply a remote argument why people should not write intelligibly for nothing.

And now having got my staff in my hand and my wallet on my back, let me start on my rambles. I dare say you would like to know what we think of our new Governor General: I will tell you what I think. He is a sharp, bustling, active man, who,

meaning to do well, has a very mistaken idea of what he will be able to accomplish. He thinks it possible to blow the bellows and finger the notes of the State organ at the same time. Not content with handling the ribbons, he must needs go into the stable to rub down the last team, and harness the next. He rushes into all the insignificance of details without dreaming that he may thereby possibly be distracted from the course of great measures. He is a man, whose house would be gutted in a riot while he was laying down the law to a neighbour for the baiting and setting of a mousetrap. He is not satisfied with being Governor General of India; his pride is to be many things more, all conspiring to make him very much less. He is just now all enthusiasm, and works as indefatigably as a young disengaged girl dances. From the slow and dignified minuet movement of legislation, he quickly slid into the *dos à dos* of a Council quadrille, and after waltzing some dozen heads of departments till they doubted which end they stood on, he started off for a country dance, in which he has got as far as Allahabad : when he will come 'down again,' is a matter upon which no one has ventured to speculate. His Lordship is said to have arrived in this country with rather a contemptible opinion of the people he was com-

ing among—I refer to Europeans—and if half the anecdotes told be true, he gave some evidence of this. He certainly did not properly estimate the value of years of practical experience as opposed to ‘bookish theories’; his off-handed way of dealing with matters great and small evinced, as I have heard from men who had opportunities of judging, a self-reliance which in a man in his situation blossomed no promise of improvement. He has a fancy for the army; and from his appointment of a native aid-de-camp, and his walk across the midawn after a tempestuous night, and on a tempestuous morning, to look after a Madras corps in tents on ‘the open,’ demonstrations have been thick and fast of his having, again like a young lady, no slight touch of the scarlet fever. The only thing to be regretted in this is, that the very popularity he is now gaining with ‘the land service’ may have a violent re-action, by creating hopes and expectations that he will never be able to satisfy. Perhaps, however, the surplus steam will have worked off before much mischief is done.

It will be a matter of much interest with you to know what his Lordship’s policy is with regard to Afghanistan. Until the other day we knew as much of it as we did when he was on the other side of the Cape. The conclusion, however,



drawn from rather indefinite premises was, that ere long we should entirely withdraw from the scene of our terrible disasters.' But really this was as much inferred from what were believed to be the views of the Ministry at home, as from any thing said or done here. The other day, however, I saw the copy of an order from the Adjutant General's Office, dated May 14th, beginning, 'Instructions having been issued for the withdrawal within the British Provinces, of the Troops serving West of the Indus ; it has become necessary to make arrangements for the comfort of the different corps during their march across the Punjaub.' There can therefore be no doubt whatever, that we are to leave the Afghans to themselves ; the proof of our power to consist, it is said, in the destruction of some of their forts, about which power nobody living, there or any where else, has any doubt. If it prove any thing, it will be, that we are afraid or too prudent to attempt more. You are a sagacious old gentleman, and will ask the wisdom of doing *this* ? I confess I don't know. The forts will be built up again more readily than the broken heads they may cost will be mended. But if this be determined on, and the Bala Hissar be unvisited, it will be Supreme Governmently ridiculous. If we are to leave any such record of our having had

the game in our own hands, it certainly should be at their capital. Now don't drag me into any discussion on this particular subject : I only say, that if we are to batter, we should batter at head-quarters.

And now for the prisoners. I deeply regret to say, I think their chance of deliverance less just now than it has been since their captivity commenced. Akhbar Khan delivered them to Mahomed Shah Khan. From Lughman they were removed to Tezeen, and have thence been carried into the mountains. Two overtures have been made to General Pollock by Akhbar through Captain Mackenzie, who was taken with General Elphinstone on the Cabul retreat. The first was unsuccessful, and the result of the second has not yet transpired. The terms no doubt include his personal safety, and it is said, the release of his father and family. It is impossible the first can be guaranteed, nor the second, with any propriety until we have left the country. Even then it would be treating with a villain instead of hunting him to the gallows ; but the fate of women and children are in the scale, and they should prevail. If our prisoners were soldiers only, I should say let them all perish rather than hold an hour's parley with such a ruffian. There is no knowing to what excess he may be driven, if help-

less and hopeless. Wholesale murder and self-destruction would be a bloody close to the bloody tragedy that has been performed.

You may have read in our papers of the two past mails—I know that the *Calcutta* and *Eastern Stars* go to two clubs of which you are a member—of a charge brought against the late Sir William Macnaghten of the most infamous description ; it being, that he had secretly intrigued with Akhbar Khan for the delivery over to that rebel of the Fort of Ghuznee, in gross violation of the sacred trust committed to him. This story was sent abroad in the columns of the *Englishman* by a connection of his, resident here. It bore internal evidence of untruth, inasmuch as a regular official letter was written by the Envoy to Col. Palmer who was in charge, and since then it has been admitted by the same party, or at any rate in the same journal, that an officer on the spot was made perfectly aware of what was going on. Another charge has more recently been brought against Sir William. It is now said, that having been in treaty with Ameen-oolah Khan, the original leader of the insurrection, he plotted with Akhbar Khan for his capture and delivery over to the British, and that this plotting and counter-plotting led to his death ; that he fell at the meeting at which the seizure

was to have been made, and to accomplish which a regiment and two guns were in ambush. This last part of the story is nonsense, and I am astonished how any one can write such very idle gossip, and more astonished at a second party publishing it. Had the regiment been at hand, it would of course have discovered itself on the perpetration of the brutal murder. That Sir William was in correspondence with the two chiefs is possible ; but that if Ameen-oolah was keeping faith, Macnaghten played him false, is what no man will readily believe.

Situated as the Envoy was, surrounded by a body of savages, and all reliance on the troops gone, he had a fearful responsibility in the lives of some twelve or thirteen thousand individuals ; and if this had no weight with him, by treachery to his country he had every thing to lose—place, power, wealth, fame—all for which that a man can desire to live—and nothing to gain, but the ignominy that would make life a burthen to all but the trebly steeped in infamy.

It is a stain on public morality, when the press, with cold inhumanity, condenses the breath of slander, which the first current of investigation would probably disperse for ever.

A few words more about Afghanistan. General Elphinstone's remains were interred at Jel-

lalabad, having been floated down the Cabul river on a raft, in charge of two Afghans. He has left behind him some documents relative to the miserable tragedy in which he was an actor. Mr. Cameron, the Law Commissioner, has been appointed to receive and report on all documents connected with the affair. It is said, that if Lady Sale survive she will give her diary to the public. Talking of giving, Lady Macnaghten has been compelled to give up her jewels, worth about £10,000 to Mahomed Shah Khan. I apprehend this will be a case for compensation. You will be glad to hear the subscription for the sufferers has reached a large amount, not less, I fancy, than nearly £40,000. Some of the donations have been princely; Mr. Bird, our Deputy Governor and President in Council, has given the largest, Rs. 5,000. I hope the example will be followed in England. The Civilians are subscribing for a sword to that noble old fellow Sale, and he well deserves all the honours that can be paid him. But in the great Jellalabad *sortie*, when Akhbar Khan was so signally defeated, he it known, Sale was a very unwilling party: the thing was proposed by four officers, Backhouse, MacGregor, and Abbott of the Artillery, and Oldfield of the 5th Cavalry, but resisted resolutely by the

General, and I am told by Dennie also ; the latter was persuaded, after some little time, to the views of the four, and joined their cause. Sale yielded at last, and you know the result. There was good ground for his hesitation, for it was a desperate venture : others had no responsibility, he a weighty one. It has been mentioned in a letter that the plan of attack agreed upon was not strictly observed. A dash was to have been made by the entire force upon the centre of Akhbar's position where his tents were, but a portion of the troops diverged to the left where there was a small fort, I believe a temporary one, and here the gallant Dennie met his death.

Before going to smaller matters, I must run off the political. From China there has been no news lately, nor shall we have any of much importance, I expect, before the end of this month, or the middle of next. When I inform you that the large bell of Ningpo has been landed here, I give you the most interesting scrap of which I am master. I have not seen it ; they say it is a great affair ; but like the mystery of the iron mask, it has not been *tolled*. The King of Oude, whose death has been expected for some time, took his leave of all sublunary things on the 16th ultimo. It was thought this event might have led to some distur-

bances, but matters went off quietly enough, his son Sooryia Jah being proclaimed his successor.

And now I may indulge in a little chit-chat, for letters may indulge in small talk, though apparitions, to which they have been likened, are not given to the familiar. It is a joke against an Englishman, that he always commences a conversation with a remark about the weather. The joke is as just here as any where between John O'Groat's and the Land's end. No man, as you know, ever thinks of beginning business of a morning without having settled with himself or a friend whether it is hotter than it was yesterday, and not infrequently he displays his powers of memory by recalling the exact height of the thermometer at the same time last year. I will venture to say that the sun, the rains, and the introductory Nor-Westers are discussed more in this city than sun, frost, rain, hail, snow, and greasy streets in the great metropolis itself. It's my belief, but for the excitement of discussing the weather and perpetually crying out for the punkah, a large number of persons (particularly among the Civilians) would expire annually of *ennui*. In London, now, a man intimates to a friend that it is hot, or cold, or wet, or foggy, or will be, (and it may be all in half a day) and passes on without caring much

what it is, simply because he is born to the habit, as a butcher's boy is to whistle. Here however as it can but be hot or not so hot, wet or not so wet, cool or not so cool, for months together, the range of remark is so much curtailed, that it is necessary to make up for the deficiency by saying the same thing—that it is hot or not so hot, cool or not so cool—very much oftener than would otherwise be necessary, and if in the aggregate the weather is not more frequently touched upon than in England, the monotony of the note is immeasurably greater.

With these introductory remarks, allow me to inform you, that the weather has been hot, and guilty of inhuman cookery in stewing, grilling and broiling us ; but we have had symptoms of the rains setting in, and are singing from Rule Britannia—

‘ On us be pleased to pour’

with great fervor. The season has been a sickly one, and there is still much illness among Europeans. Cholera, which was very bad, is less prevalent, and I apprehend hardly kills more now than poison, strangulation, and other violent visitations. Murder is a very serious complaint in Calcutta throughout the year, and is generally as mysterious as cholera itself. It is known to carry



off very large numbers, but I cannot give you a statistical report, as the Police take little or no notice of them, and make no returns. If you refer to Lord Auckland's minute on Cooly Emigration, you will find he says—'It is, however, but too true, that this branch of our Service is most defective and ineffective, and the different experiments which have been tried for its reform, have generally ended in disappointment.' This is creditable to the past, and hopeful for the future. Of course a thoroughly efficient force might be organized: there is but one objection to it; it would be expensive. While a Governor General has about £25,000 per annum, and a Commander-in-Chief £17,000, and a Bishop £5,000, and the Judges £20,000 among them, and the Civil Service salaries are, say from £360 to £6,000, it is clear that we cannot afford a good Police. But the thing does not press, for the gangs of miscreants who infest the sinks of the city have not yet tried their hands upon Europeans, and there is a large surplus native population. But to return to the weather. About a fortnight ago, with the thermometer at 90° in a cool, darkened room, some of the Military at Barrackpore gave a fancy dress ball, which was crammed. Don't be angry with Charlotte and Rosanne wanting to go seven

miles to a County ball after this. Why here you see girls went about seventeen, to dance in a room with the temperature at least 100° : ‘melting moments’ for the dear creatures, with the red right arm of an admiring *Militaire* round their dear little (or large) waists whirling them into a warm bath, and as Shakespear says, sighing like a furnace.

Oh, 'tis love, 'tis love, 'tis love,  
That makes the World go *round*—

might we not, my dear Mackenzie, say *flat*. By-the-bye will you tell Charlotte that since I have buckled-to in earnest, I will send her before long a full, true, and particular account of those various matters upon which she questioned me last October, when Mrs. Templeton came out, and almost tempted her to be her *compagnon de voyage*. I will tell her the honest truth ; but unless I alter my present resolution, I shall not advise her, since it is a ticklish affair, as the trout said to the fly.

The ball that I have mentioned is the only smack of gaiety there has been for some time. Government House, which under a former reign was always open, is as close shut as a miser's fist. The ladies of Calcutta, particularly, will miss an acknowledged head of society of their own sex. The ‘At Homes’ of the Misses Eden were agreeable and convenient ; agreeable to the steady and

sedate ; agreeable and convenient to ‘ the young of either sex’, as the religious tracts have it. The theatre too has been closed about a month, and will not re-open until probably the middle of July. According to rumour, *William Tell* will be the opening play. Last season was eminently successful : you probably remember the high price days of the old Chowringhee ; nevertheless I will wager a trifle you are surprised at hearing that nearly £6,000 were taken in about ten months, not averaging more than three performances in a month : the prices of admission are, Rs. 6 to the Boxes, and Rs. 3 to the Pit. With the exception of three or four professional actresses the corps is of amateurs. With comparatively few private parties, no public entertainment, (as of course there ought to be at Government House,) no theatre, and no concerts, the community is dull enough. Even the Queen’s birth-day saw no demonstration, but this was entirely *selon la règle*. It is very rarely we indulge in the loyal within the Ditch.

The dulness of the polite world is, I believe, shared by the commercial ; but as my speculations rarely extend beyond the means of paying house rent and bazaar bills, I am no good authority on these matters. We have had no failures here, however, the last few weeks. One firm has stop-

ped at Benares, Messrs. Gordon, Collie and Co. in consequence, as said, of the failure of Gilmore and Co. The club of one Hercules was said to have been all but out of his hand, but some friends have caught and replaced it. Talking of clubs, your old one, the Bengal, has shifted its quarters to Chowringhee; rather out of the way, but the new premises possess many advantages the old ones had not. And there has been a new one established. What do you think of the "Hindoo Widow Marrying Club"? Such is the title under which some daring young gentlemen have banded themselves for the purpose of breaking through one of the most solemn edicts of Hinduism, and setting at defiance the expositions of the Brahmuns. In England we admit he is a far bolder man who tackles a widow than he who woos a maid. What shall we say then of these heroes, who not only pledge themselves to besiege widows, but attack, in doing it, one of the savage and inhuman ordinances of heathenism. I do not think the attempt will be successful just yet. There are many youths bold enough to talk and write, but I doubt whether there is one in Bengal with the moral courage to act. Still every thing must have a beginning, and if the present demonstration operates only as slow pioneering, it may be exceed-

ingly important in its results. A wealthy native, (you will recollect him by name at least) Baboo Mooty Lall Seal, some time since offered a premium of Rs. 10,000 to the first man who married a Hindoo widow. There has been talk of its being claimed, but I fancy it will be some time before he signs a cheque on that account. A man is not born in a century who has the courage openly and practically to oppose himself to the superstitions of his religion;—I take no note of mere wordy scoffers;—the odds therefore are very great against his being found when called upon.

I have already written at such length that I can find neither time nor room for half a dozen other subjects I had intended to have touched upon; but as I wrote you a long letter by the *India* steamer, you are now very considerably my debtor. There is some difference of opinion here as to whether that vessel will be able to face the monsoon. My own opinion is, that she will; but should this come to hand before my last, you will of course conclude that she did not. We are all very anxious to see one of the boats specially built for our line out here: I put very little faith in public advertisements of time of sailing, as they are rarely observed; and in the case of a new steamer, perhaps, it is almost impossible they

should be. That the *Precursor* has not been sent out here is just a piece of madness. I confess that I hardly understand what is being done, or to be done with her at home. If sold it will be at considerable loss, and if she comes out here a year later than she might have done, what she will have lost in the interim will add some thousands of pounds to her original cost.

Baboo Dwarkanauth Tagore, of the House of Carr, Tagore and Co.—the Malta Papers call him a prince—does not appear to have hurried towards England, probably anxious to reach it in the fullness of summer. He writes from Malta in terms of warm admiration of all he has seen, and dwells with some *gusto* on the antiquities of Egypt. He is by far the best specimen of a native gentleman you have ever had in England, and will give those who make his acquaintance a better idea of what European intercourse has done for this country, than half a dozen volumes could tell them. As a man who has gone far in advance of his time; taken the lead on all occasions when public objects were to be promoted; *fêted* the wealthy, and befriended the poor, to whom besides his private charity he has been a munificent public benefactor, he certainly merits marked distinction at home, and no doubt will

11943.

receive it. I heard it discussed the other day (the conversation arose out of the Knighthood bestowed on Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy of Bombay) what honours awaited him. All were unanimous that he must be Knighted at least, and some considered he would receive the higher premium of a Baronetcy. This I think extremely improbable. Hereditary English titles among natives of this country are by no means desirable. Even Knighting Sir Jam. I look upon as very ridiculous. Many personal marks of the estimation in which he was held might have been given, which would have been quite as expressive to him, and much more intelligible to his countrymen. By-the-bye, our new Chief Justice, Mr. Lawrence Peel, has not been yet Knighted, and rumour says does not desire to be. We have never yet had a Chief Justice without a title, and only two Puisnes, Mr. Justice Lemaistre and Mr. Justice Hyde. I see some of the London Papers call his appointment a job of the Prime Minister's, and one or two of the Madras Papers have re-echoed this cry. There is no truth in it. Through whatever interest he succeeded to Sir Edward Ryan's chair, the patronage is here thought to have been very wisely bestowed, and I think has given universal satisfaction. You remember, I dare say well enough—the restless

spirit of champagne should haunt you when you forget it—Sir Charles Metcalfe's House at Garden Reach. It has had no settled tenant for some time, and was apparently going to ruin. The Chief Justice has taken it on a lease of five years, and it is undergoing a thorough repair.

And now I must put the finishing touch to this pen and ink drawing, which I do, by subscribing myself,

My dear Mackenzie,

Your's very sincerely,

AN IDLER.

P. S.—JUNE 4TH.—I wrote the conclusion of the above during a gale from the North-East, which promised to be unusually severe, and terribly it has kept its promise. There has been nothing like it for many years. During a lull yesterday that lasted about two hours, I rode into Calcutta from about eight miles down the river. The road up was in many places impassable for any vehicle, trees of the largest growth lying entirely across the road. From Kidderpore Dock for two or three miles upwards, the shore is one continued wreck. I have been out this morning, and it is



impossible to describe the scene of destruction that presents itself. Ships are lying up and down and across the tide, jammed as nothing but such a gale in such a river could jam them. The *Lady Clifford*, *Coringa Packet*, *Resolution*, and *Guisachan* with three others form one lot—masts, yards, bowsprits gone; bulwarks and quarter galleries smashed, and looking on deck perfect wrecks. There are several other lots in precisely the same predicament, and the American ship *Senator*, which was much injured in her stern framework yesterday, and had drifted to Chandpaul Ghaut, is this morning, I understand, no where to be found. I am afraid the reports from Saugor will be awful. Two old captains told me the great gale of 1833 was nothing like it in severity. The Barometer was down 28° 10." It is still blowing hard.

MY DEAR ALFRED,

*Calcutta, July 5, 1842.*

When I closed my letter to that respectable old gentleman your father, we were hardly out of the thick of a gale that, though the last comer, has taken precedence in reputation of all that have gone before, at least during the present century. There is said to be an old lady here who speaks with lively recollection of a storm in 1700 and something, as being more severe than that of last month, and we have a magistrate who might be examined to the same point; but it would be hardly worth while, even as a matter of history, for your old people stick obstinately to the superiority of every thing belonging to the days when they were young,—I dare say even to their very storms. There is great satisfaction in having seen something or heard something that nobody about you has ever seen or heard, because you tell it your own way, and when a man's knowledge of a fact links him with bygone times,

he assumes a momentary importance which gratifies the vanity that haunts even the withered tenement of life, battered by perhaps the assaults of a century. But whether the storm of 1700 and something was, or was not, heavier than that of last month, the latter was frightfully severe, and the damage it did immense. I am told that within a few days after there were not less than forty applications for docking assistance. The loss of life was happily not nearly as heavy as might have been expected. The *Globe* and the *Symmetry* were the only two vessels that can be said to have been totally lost during the storm. The crew of the former escaped, but of the latter, a fine brig belonging to Fletcher, the majority went down. There may have been about seventeen or eighteen hands in all, of whom seven reached Calcutta.

One of these was the chief officer, who was picked up after being nearly eight hours in the water. He gave me a written statement of the catastrophe to the moment of his being swept from the vessel, which has been published in the papers. You will see it in this 'Overland.' The Captain, (Saville) his wife, and the pilot were all lost, and the account given of the last scene is most distressing. Before the sea came that brought all the ruin it threatened, the vessel was half under water, and

Mrs. S., half dead with fear and exhaustion, was between the binnacle and the wheel, with her husband holding her. Mr. Hayden the pilot was immediately becalmed them. Then came a heavy sea—a crash—a cry of agony, and all was over. I don't know that I should have told you more than that the vessel was lost, and there an end, but that it happened I met the commander and his wife after the vessel left Calcutta, and spent some part of two or three days in their company, and it is singular how much more a catastrophe of this kind affects you if you have ever even seen one of the sufferers. You will I dare say see something like an accurate account of the disasters among the shipping in the monthly papers, but the loss of life appears to have been confined to this unfortunate vessel.

Since the storm every thing has been a dead calm ; there has not been life enough on shore to awake a dormouse. Our political relations have been as little interesting as relations generally are, and our domestic occurrences have been confined to a fair average of births, deaths, marriages, and robberies, which latter are not only domestic, but daily occurrences, forming the great standing disgrace to our local legislature. I know you have the political itch strong upon you—it will be

more decent to call it an eruption—and that it is naturally most troublesome during that season of the year when Parliament is sitting. I know you will think me a blockhead if I don't prove myself one, by undertaking to talk upon matters of which I know little or nothing. I am perfectly sure that you will be annoyed for a month if I don't tell you something about Afghanistan and China, that you may have new ground to go over in your interminable club discussions. Little Roebuck, a very clever chap, but far too opinionated and knock-me-down in his style of speaking as well as writing, with a sneer for every argument that he disapproves, but an argument for every sneer of an opponent, little Roebuck and smooth-faced milky John Mill, who is an admirable specimen of how a clever father may educate a clever son, Graham, perhaps the ablest of the lot, Prescott, at whose house you know we used to meet to read Whately and chop logic, and two or three others whose names I forget, have to answer for inoculating you with the disputative passion, which I am quite aware will never be allayed till all the world are your way of thinking on all possible subjects—when you will probably weep you have none others to convert, or possibly start afresh to prove that they were never more wrong

than when they agreed with you. I look upon you, Alfred, as a melancholy specimen of how syllogisms may pervert a man's nature. When you first joined that little knot of embryo—any thing you please,—I don't like to call names, you were one of the most modest youths in London, perhaps next to myself the most modest: before you had belonged to it three months you would not have admitted your own existence, or that a donkey was not a cameleopard, without majors and minors. Your mother writes me that nothing but the strongest natural affection could put up with you, that your eternal syllogisms disorganize the whole family and keep them in hot water; which, she says, evidently with tears in her pen, by a syllogism you are always ready to disprove. I know then you will want to syllogize on central Asia and the celestial empire: the only premises I can advise you to do it in, is the club house in Pall Mall. Here I assure you we are as ignorant of what is doing, or to be done, as any cabman who drives you to and fro. Why even our Editors, who 'hear,' and 'see,' and 'understand,' and 'are informed,' and 'believe,' more than the whole of a community beside, are utterly at fault; and between ourselves, neither understand much, nor are particularly informed.

The great question we all desire to have set at rest is, whether our troops are eventually to retire or advance—whether we are to do ought to retrieve our damaged fame, or make the best of our way back to safe quarters. More contradictory and repugnant indications never arose to perplex the wise men of the East. To day go, to-morrow no go—

11943.

‘ See-saw Margery Daw

Sold her bed to lie upon straw’—

which it appears to me we shall exactly have done when we have squandered lacks of rupees in making a show, and doing nothing. But what, you will say, was Lord Ellenborough’s intentions when he came out here? I have no objection to tell you that; but don’t disbelieve it because any Tory of the Carlton turns up his conservative nose, and looks as if he knows better. When Lord Ellenborough left England his policy was immediate retirement: when he reached Madras and heard of the disasters that had overtaken us, he was brought to a stand still,—taken aback, *vulgo*, flabbergasted. By the time he had personally inspected half a dozen Transports in the Roads, Richard was himself again, and his mind was made up, made up right side out, so that more than one had an opportunity of knowing it. He would hold

Jellalabad (I presume there was a proviso, if Sale did) till the character of Britain and British India was honourably re-established. After Sale's gallant *sortie*, we had that magniloquent acknowledgment of it which you have of course seen, and which was, I expect, his Lordship's own composition. Whether he thought this was a satisfactory vindication of our prowess or not, or whether the warlike enthusiasm which the news of our misfortunes lighted up had gone out, and the home policy (when he left) of retiring again prevailed, is of course uncertain : but certain it is, that retirement was decided upon *and ordered* : then came the London Mail, (the Cabul disasters having been known) and with the Mail, dispatches, and with the dispatches (as I have no doubt) a warning of the ruin that would overtake us should we attempt to withdraw our troops without protection. The countermand was issued. Pollock had written to remonstrate, and he was not controlled. Then came rumours of an Army of Reserve, and upon the back of the rumours came the orders for the same. This Army of Reserve set people abroad again. Almost every body inferred that an onward move had again been determined upon. But this was jumping at a conclusion, running headlong one way without looking about to see whether



there were not two to choose between. This Army, which is to meet at Sirhind in October, is fully as essential to a safe retirement as to a safe advance. There can be no doubt that the former would raise the country to a man against us : they are quarrelling a little among themselves because we may be among them, and with an eye on this possibility each influential leader has his own game to play ; but with our backs to Cabul, with an evident intention to cut the connection, they would come down upon us *en masse*. And this is not all : the Seikhs of the Panjāub are said to be true to us, but they have a powerful and unmanageable soldiery, ripe for revolt, and we might find ourselves between two fires, did we not show ourselves prepared with engines to keep both under.

But you will again ask, saying,—I hope, so far so good ; ‘And when this army is in the field, what are we to do?’ Upon my veracity I don’t know ; but I’ll tell you what I think,—pay our Provinces the compliment a Scotchman is said not to be very fond of paying the Land of Cakes, come ‘bock again.’ If we should happen to find an opening for a row with the Punjaub, we should be well prepared ; we should add rather a desirable possession to our present empire, and the

*eclat* of conquest would help to mitigate the mortification of our Affghan failure. My own opinion now is, that if the prisoners are ever released, it will be by treaty, and that Dost Mahomed will be informed he is at liberty to depart in peace. One word about Candahar, and then I will return to India, a place I like well enough, and I am particularly thankful I do, as I am not likely to get away from it much before Albert, Prince of Wales, is playing the devil with John Bull's money in an 'Establishment' of his own. General Nott, who has been about the best ill-used man in the Company's Service since the war began, has never made a mistake. He appears to be a thorough soldier, and to have abilities to rule as well as to command. Lord Ellenborough has given him supreme Military and Political control in Lower Afghanistan and Scinde,—about one of the wisest things he has done since he came out. Nott has not been fairly dealt by, even in his command at Candahar. He has been left destitute of money, medicine for his sick and wounded, and for a long time without the re-enforcement, in the shape of Cavalry, that he had prayed for. With two or three regiments of Cavalry he might have been at Cabul months ago, and held Afghanistan for a twelve-month. The order for the retirement of

the troops got abroad in his neighbourhood, and the country that he had reduced to a state of tolerable tranquillity was immediately in arms, swearing to annihilate every Feringhee upon the retreat. The General was disappointed in an attack threatened on the evening of the 28th May, or early on the morning of the 29th, so in the course of the latter day he went out to the enemy who would not come to him, 6000 strong, under Prince Sufter Jung, and totally routed them. The Sipahis are said to have behaved on this, as on former occasions under his command, in the most gallant manner. A letter describing briefly this action, says, that no troops in the world could have exceeded them in any one requisite of the thorough soldier. One singular circumstance I have heard, and I think on good authority, that the native troops stood the severe cold on the retreat from Cabul, fully as well, if not better, than the Europeans !

The China news since the last mail is not worth the broken saucer upon which a celestial swears. I will not bore you with any surmises. We are in clover in that part of the world, killing them in our discretion, and making them pay for the powder and steel. We are walking to the heaven of peace in velvet slippers, as our worthy Bishop

intimated to us yesterday we must not expect to do ; though *his* ideas were of course in another direction. Talking of Bishops does not naturally lead one to religion, but the mention of our really estimable, but eccentric CALCUTTA, suggests a word or two upon a schism that is driving the wedge of disunion tolerably fast into the Church, and will possibly, before long, produce a regular split. The Bishop has a holy horror of Puseyism, (if you happen to understand what it means, have the kindness to let me know, for I don't find people here agree upon the subject) and that most patient of animals, the Church, has been set by the ears about no body knows what. We have had dreadful rumours of papacy, priestcraft and bonfires, extraordinary investigations into public Institutions, and official disclosures of nothing ! Reverend Gentlemen are in a state of no little alarm, lest those whose appointments they would fancy should be suspected, fail to prove themselves innocent of an unorthodox *ism*, and so be requested to resign or be turned out ; and in fact the devil—for surely discord is a devil—has got among them. I read some of the Oxford Tracts, but they were not exactly the style of literature I most affect, so I thought I'd pick up notions here and there, in the hope of eventually understanding the doc-

trines of the New School or the old *redivivus*. I believe I am getting on pretty well. I learn from one quarter that Puseyism is a damnable heresy, which is a pretty good mouthful, and from another that it is pancakes and wax tapers. Now my dear Alfred, if you have any syllogism to prove anything pro or con in this matter, just propound it, for though I am an anythingarian among clerical disputants, I should like privately to go right if possible, and would forego pancakes, though I confess with reluctance, if it were shown to be essential to an advantageous lease of the next world. Bigotry is a plant that thrives very decently in this climate, and is found in the compounds (read gardens) alike of Heathens and Christians—the latter, however, make most of it. The bigotry of the Heathen is the bigotry of ignorance; the bigotry of the Christian is more frequently a religious overstrain, and a falling on the other side. We have had two instances lately—one of each—that will illustrate what I mean. There was an old gentleman here of the name of Hare, erst a watchmaker, but for many years in business as a philanthropist; and though he lost the best part of his money in the latter speculation, I believe he gained a world of satisfaction, and never regretted that he laid out all his capital in pur-

chasing a post obit annuity in an office that will never fail. About a month ago the Cholera put him in the way of drawing it—in other words, he died; and though it has been unkindly enough said that he was not over-religious, he died with all the composure that a good conscience can secure a man. He was told he was very ill and must take medicine, to which he appears to have had—then, at least,—some aversion. He was assured it was necessary, whereupon he consented, admitting that if a man was to die, he might just as well die *secundum artem*. In this happy frame of mind he took leave of the world, leaving behind him thirty-five gold and silver watches of various fashions, and a character for benevolence that will hand his name down to the great-great grandchildren of the present generation, to be spoken of with reverence and affection—always providing that gratitude is a feature in the Native character. When old Hare's remains were buried in the Hindu College Square—for though no dab as a scholar, Native education was the thorough-bred hobby on which he cantered through the independent years of his valuable life, and this was thought a fitting place in which to stall him up, and litter him down for his long sleep—sixty *Heads* of families, as they styled themselves, re-

monstrated against this, and said it contaminated and defiled the water of an adjoining tank ! What do you think of that ? ' At the first blush of the thing I was weak enough to think about their prejudices, and that they ought to be consulted ; but twice considering the petition that ' the nuisance ' might be removed, and remembering that the very fish of the holy Gunga smells fleshy from the number of human bodies that go to corruption in it, I thought they were bigots, or humbugs, or something of both. The worms have been undisturbed in their repast, and the water I have little doubt is as freely drawn as ever.

Now let me give you a slight idea of another complexioned people, whose extravagancies we have to put up with—though not without the satisfaction of making texts of them for the good of society. We had a play here for the benefit of the Cabul subscription, and on presenting the proceeds they were rejected, on the ground that the source was unholy ! No doubt it was, but not a bad one nevertheless. Would you not put the sixty heads of Hindu families and this Committee into a blanket and shake them up together ? I assure you I know nothing in a quiet way I should like better, excluding of course those who have had an *ex-officio* right to repudiate the Stage all the long years it

has been purified from the description of performances which the priesthood sanctioned. The money was sent to the Kurnaul Committee, and received with thanks.

You will thank your stars you do not live in a small city or town. In a very extensive community, things of this kind, if they exist, do not annoy—for the unsavoury odour of cant is not thrust immediately under one's nose. In Calcutta—which is a very small place indeed—there is no possibility of escaping the knowledge of all the fantastic tricks that are played before high heaven in the matters of religion, law, justices' justice, commerce, and social intercourse, and a man who desires to be free from the knowledge of matters that don't concern him, must stay in his house, and stuff his ears with cotton. It is a small town, but an immense tattle mart, where you may buy, sell, or swap gossip to any extent. There are plenty of persons who will deny this, and say that it is an obsolete scandal, a vulgar error, but it is not the less true. You will not understand me as saying that people are more scandalously inclined here than elsewhere, I think rather that they are less so—perhaps from a sense of needing the charity they bestow ;—but the comparative idleness of all hands, and the al-



most entire absence of public amusements, make it quite an excitement to hear and report the most thoroughly insignificant matters about the every bodies and even the nobodies of society. I say we have no public amusements: the Theatre and one other building (and that but occasionally) are the only ones. I want you to suggest to any respectable 'Star' that he might make a very good thing of it by coming out here for a season, when the monthly communication between Suez and this is well established. After having starred the provinces for years, and quarrelled with the London managers, what more delightful than to take this trip—France, Italy, Greece, Egypt;—but perhaps the pleasure part might be advantageously postponed till the return, when the Pagoda tree had been shaken. What more easy than to leave London and be in Calcutta in six weeks, where we have really a good theatre, and what would be more important to the experimentalist, a public who supports it with uncommon liberality. I really believe a man of reputation might be in England again in four or five months with a thousand shiners in his pocket, and all the expenses of a Continental excursion liberally paid. Fancy young Kean and his wife coming out (not particularly caring about their gain,) for just one season, anxi-

ous to shake off the dust of the London Boards, and be very thoroughly purified from the smell of the foot-lights. Why they would fill the house here through the entire roll of their characters, and be *fêted* and addressed, and lionized, and, I say again, carry home a very substantial acknowledgment of their deserts. Let me tell you, moreover, we are by no means a contemptible Company here; that is, we should not be if we had any one to take the tip-top line. You may take my word for it that the best provincial Company at home is very inferior, upon the whole, to the Corps we might bring together. You will show this letter to your friend Charles, I am aware, and he may laugh at it; but ask him to recall the Company he was playing with (Seymour's) at the Plymouth Theatre, just previous to his re-appearance in London, and what he received, and tell him not to think too scurvily of the Drama in India. His father, the greatest actor of modern times, was just the man to have taken his portmanteau and come out for 'a sky.' These Steamers will yet do wonders, and I fully reckon on some one, or more, before long, being induced to act upon the hint I have given; but let sticks stay at home—and even second rates had better bring letters of credit.

By the bye, the Oriental and Peninsular Company do not, according to my mind, appear to have behaved very well in the matter of the *Precursor*. The keeping up a correspondence on the subject so long, and finally wanting to pay for her in full in their own shares, while the Committee here have about £30,000 to make good in hard cash,—money borrowed from the Union and Agra Banks to complete her,—was something like a joke. It is impossible to doubt, from reading the whole correspondence, that they must have seen the agents for the boat never contemplated any thing of the kind. It looks to me as if when it came to the point the Company had not got the necessary funds to pay even a third in cash. Ascertain what the Co's paid up £50 shares are actually worth, and whether there would be ready purchasers to the extent of £75,000. A meeting of the Precursors was held here on the 2nd. and it was determined that the Committee should have full power to make any arrangements they might think best for the benefit of the subscribers and for their own protection, having become jointly and severally liable for three lacks of rupees. The Committee intend to leave the matter to four members now in England—Mr. Dickens, Mr. Newcomen, Mr. C. Lyall, and Dwarkanauth

Tagore. They will sell her for cash to others, or for shares to the Oriental, or send her out, as they may see fit. I confess I don't see much chance of the last, for all the coals that were ready in the depôts have been sold to the *India*; yet in my opinion it would be better to send her out, than part with her for any thing short of the rowdy.

I assure you people are tolerably sick of the Steam question, and I believe the most admirable plan that could be laid before the public would fail now to draw Rs. 5,000 from their pockets. And this is not to be wondered at, considering the great number of years they have been blowing their steam bubble. I don't think the Orientals need calculate on many of the Precursorites keeping their shares, even if they take them; for seven per cent, supposing such a dividend to have been paid on the profits, is not enough for your Eastern capitalists. The Steam Ferry Bridge Company here would, however, be glad to get back their money, and close the concern, sacrificing all the return they calculated upon, and quietly putting up with the loss of all interest; nay, I should not wonder but they would take ten or fifteen shillings in the pound. This failure, I have no doubt, has been the result of

mismanagement, probably going to work too fast, and on too large a scale. Now they want some lacks more than they have got, and the whole machinery, boats etc. are all being hawked, if I may so say—but I fear will find no purchasers. It has been suggested that the Government ought to come forward and carry out this undertaking, and it will be a thousand pities if they do not.

The plan is perfectly feasible, and of no more difficult execution than the Ferry Bridge across the Tamar, where the largest vessels pass up and down, and the tide at times runs at, I should say, least six knots an hour. It would be one of the most important public works undertaken for some time, and more than the sum that is required is to the credit of the Ferry Fund.

I mentioned in my last to your father, that Mr. Cameron, the Law Commissioner, had been appointed to report upon the Cabul disasters, or at least that all papers connected therewith were to be forwarded to him. People in England will of course be very anxious to know what comes to light. All I can say at present is, that not a syllable has transpired. A letter I received last mail mentioned that a Royal Commission was to issue for this most serious enquiry: I don't ask

you whether you have heard anything about it, for if I do not see it in the Gazette by the June mail I shall treat it as a false rumour. The man who wrote me however, ought to be tolerably well informed. There has not been a tittle of evidence from first to last to bear out the charge of baseness and violation of trust brought against the late Envoy, Sir William Macnaghten. I have reason to think it originated in dullness operated upon by malignity. It was a shocking reproach on the Civil Service, of which Macnaghten was always a distinguished member from the very passing of his examinations, and I know well that the attack has been looked upon with infinite disgust throughout the Service. You may take my word for it that every syllable that has ever been uttered prejudicial to the Envoy's integrity will be proved to be as false as—I leave you, my dear Alfred, to supply the *hiatus*. That he was credulous, confident, and unsuspecting, where he ought to have been suspicious and watchful, may be true ; that he erred from over-confidence in himself, I think likely ; but that he compromised the national character, and held up his country to infamy, is what would not be asserted by any but a man himself essentially base, and who felt how he would have acted to make his own market.

Enough of this—it lowers humanity several pegs to know there are maggots in character as well as cheese.

In my last I said that I would reply to Charlotte's letter on the subject of coming<sup>d</sup> out to this country, for really though she strove ingeniously enough to ask apparently rather unimportant questions—when I put this and that together I saw the drift of her enquiries. Since then I have had a plain straightforward, yes or no query from Charles Maxwell—you will recollect the curly headed boy, who came to Reading the Christmas of 1820, when we left ; and who, refinement of cruelty ! was sent to a new school to stay the holidays, at the very moment about an hundred happy young urchins were going home—I have had a plain question from him in these words—‘ Can I do any good for myself by coming out to Calcutta ?’ He has £80 per annum in a London Banking House, as an out-door clerk, and has no doubt his own umbrella and gaiters to find. Can he do better here ! My dear Alfred, like a good Samaritan write to him, or call if you can, (he has the third floor at No. 11, Bartlett's Buildings, Holborn) tell him I had not time to write, but that if he has got £100 worth of property in the world to convert it into cash—it will bring him out in a

Liverpool ship and equip him besides. When he is here he has only to be introduced to any one of five or six gentlemen I will point out to him, and if he plays his cards well he will in a few months fall into some berth or another of, say £20 per month. Don't let him go mad with joy at the thought of £240 a year instead of £80. It will be quite time enough for him to do that when he understands how much his money will do for him. If he gets into the right school he will find that he can have a house, or live in an hotel, with four or five servants, a couple of horses and a buggy. He may figure nightly on the Course in patent leather boots and unblemished kids, drink simkin, or as you say, Champagne, play whist, billiards, and the devil, till he gets weary of pleasure, by which time he will probably have become a secretary or a partner in a mercantile house, when he will marry the prettiest girl who does not happen to have a better offer, and be able to send a family instalment home to his anxious mother every three years, without feeling any material drain upon his pocket. By all means let Charles Murray come out at once; and indeed any young fellow who is turning up city mud in high-lows, with boots for Sundays only in the suburbs, at any lower remuneration than £500



per annum, will find this an excellent market. But for your sister Charlotte : say by next mail I will, if possible, write her a long letter, telling her more perhaps than she has asked. Remember me kindly to all your circle, and ‘

Believe me, my dear Alfred,

Your's faithfully,

AN IDLER. .

MY DEAR ALFRED,

*Calcutta, Aug. 13, 1842.*

I commissioned you last month to tell Charlotte I would write her by this Mail. It is a source of great regret to me that I am unable to do so. Illness has laid me by the heels for the last fifteen days, and I am in no spirits after living on calomel and senna to write at the eleventh hour the sort of letter she would look for. I therefore promise for next month, as all I can do, and in the mean time will run off a brief letter to you on the nothings which the past four weeks have brought forth. I do this, lest you should by any possibility see or hear that some excellent articles in the *Eastern Star* have been ascribed to 'the late Idler,' and so conclude that I have been 'cabined, cribbed, •confined' in a wooden tenement of five feet eight by twenty-two inches, with landed property of the same dimensions. Thank Heaven! (you know my little responsibilities) it has not come to this yet: I am mending,

H

upon my soul, as the cobbler said when he was working on his own shoes.

A duller month no man has ever had to record. With the exception of some few matters of local interest, there has been nothing to engage public attention, or even afford comment for the papers. Lord Ellenborough and his intentions have ceased to excite the slightest interest. He is thoroughly incomprehensible. His *eclat* with the Military seems to have been but momentary, and I now know no class of the community prepared to hold up a hand in his favour. I dare say, the *John Bull*, however, who talked of the general acclamations with which he had been received, will tell us in due course of time that he continues to command public applause. Let not the public at home attach the slightest credence to anything of the kind. There is not, and cannot be, the slightest confidence in his administration of affairs. He has now been here six months, and he has neither done nor prepared to do anything likely to uphold the honour of England or serve the interests of this country. He is a great bashaw, with a great mind to do great things, but as his mind is supposed to vary in its resolves about as frequently as the sun sets, the public speculations of to-day are knocked upon the head before to-morrow, and

all is uncertainty, anxiety, and even dread. He has no confidence in anybody, and everybody returns the compliment. The *Englishman*, even, who went the whole hog in writing him up, has been compelled to let him down, and more than this, is constantly kicking at him, notwithstanding which, with a magnanimity truly admirable, Lord Ellenborough has allowed his name to appear in the advertised list as a subscriber for a whole year! and next to an Aide-de-camp of the late Governor General! If I did not think you and others would be a little curious as to the doings of a man who has always prided himself on his knowledge of Indian affairs, and whose ambition has long been directed to the post he now fills, I should say nothing about him, for his career hitherto has not deserved notice. But great things have been expected of him by his friends, and even his political opponents have considered that he would bring a mass of slowly gathered information to help him in his novel situation. The time of his advent, too, I mean the very peculiar positions of the country, lent great interest to his accession, and though that has subsided he cannot be insignificant while he has the destinies of an empire under his thumb, although he may have achieved the unenviable notoriety of being the most

exalted of incompetents. You will agree with me—that he should have been energetic and firm, that his course of action should have been ‘short, sharp and decisive:’ we have proved him weak and vacillating, without an end or aim that the most sagacious could detect. The cream of the joke is, if there may be joking on so serious a subject, that of this he is extremely proud, and that what he does not know of his own intentions he chuckles at nobody else being able to find out! You will not think I write too strongly when I assure you that, to the best of my belief, there is not at the present moment a man in India who can say what is to be the general outline of our policy with regard to Afghanistan, a subject which you will readily believe occupies every reflective mind in the country. It is no part of my province to handle Military matters, but still I can understand, in common with others, the contempt into which he is bringing our power. As the case at present stands, we are supposed to be able neither to advance nor retire;—fixtures, which taken at a valuation, must be estimated at a low figure by the Afghans. There is an excellent story afloat of General Nott, (and not a bit too good to be true) that when he received orders to retire, he wrote to enquire

whether by Cabul or Quettah? Why he has not been allowed to 'retire' as he would have chosen, by the Capital, it is difficult to say ; since small wars, which are the Duke's abhorrence, have been waged to a considerable extent in the neighbourhood of Pesh Boluck and Goolie. General Nott has a splendid force, and could have marched in triumph from Candahar by Cabool to Jellalabad, and thence province-ward, doing, or forbearing as he might have been instructed. To have held the Capital while we arranged our evacuation, would have covered something of its disgrace, if not have wiped it away ; and this he could have done as easily as he has garrisoned Candahar. In fact, his force without assistance from any quarter could have held the whole of Afghanistan for a twelvemonth, while our great ones were making up their mind. But he has been individually badly treated, and his army has been unprofitably employed in winning local victories,—which they have always done most gallantly,—while they might, as I have said, have retrieved the faded glory of our arms, and somewhat redeemed our emasculated policy. The great stand-by with the few who have advocated passive endurance has been, that Generals Pollock and Sale could do nothing for want of carriage. They

have made the most of it, but they cannot stretch it to cover the inactivity that has been forced upon General Nott. However, enough of this subject. Lord Ellenborough has not given greater satisfaction in other matters which he has taken up. His intimation that all Staff appointments are to be vacated after an incumbency of five years, has only excited pity at his extreme ignorance of the subject he was handling. It is a crude, ill-digested notion, expressed as obscurely as a Tory promise of reform, and will be about as much carried into execution. Then we have had a Finance Committee which is to cut down the Civil expenditure 25 per cent. which of course is, again, moonshine. That great reductions may be made, I believe; but to start with a declaration of their extent is nonsense. The fact is, that innumerable heavy charges carried to the Civil expenditure account do not rightfully belong to it, and it is to be hoped the Committee will note this in their report.

And now a few words about Calcutta; and really a few will dispose of the doings since I wrote you last, for a more insufferably dull season, even this dull place never knew. Government House, which was wont under the sovereignty of the Honorable the Misses Eden, to bring

Society pleasantly together, may be said to have been closed since their departure. It stands a huge, dirty, disreputable, untenanted pile; melancholy looking adjunct\* and an idle guard 'possess it merely'.— I mean its compound—while now and then the Council room is tenanted for an hour, I suppose for form's sake, since it is said to be an experiment the Lord Sahib is now making, whether India cannot be governed without its present expensive Presidential machinery.

Trade is dull; the Shipping interest in a sinking state—from 30 to 37 shillings a ton to England! and even less inducement to go elsewhere. Our newspapers, always excepting those in which you know I feel a little interest,—the *Calcutta Star* and *Eastern Star*—insufferably dull. Our other two journals have been tugging, and hauling, and mauling Akbar Khan for the last two or three weeks, as if the whole of British India afforded no subject for a comment. When they have done with him, they certainly ought to get up a testimonial between them, for he has been an invaluable and (as they appear to have thought) an inexhaustible subject. From the Mofussil we hear of nothing but disaster from that large body of gentlemen familiarly called *Blues*. The Indigo

\* Old gentlemanly-looking birds.



season will be something worse than very bad, the outturn not exceeding, say, 90,000 maunds. The Steam Ferry Bridge Company, the difficulties of which I believe I mentioned in a former letter, has been dissolved, just as the machinery and an able engineer arrived, but a few gentlemen have taken some steps to form another, and it is sincerely to be hoped they may succeed. Application has been made to Government for assistance, and refused. All useful public works are at a stand still—a sagacious economy; but there must be abundant cash somewhere, since Lord Ellenborough sends down to his nonentities here to organize a demi-military pipe-clay police for the provinces, the annual expenses of which I have heard estimated at many more lacks than the Treasury is likely to have to its credit for some years. The City Police has come to such a pass, that people are begging they may be taxed for the support of a better! and well they may, when a band of armed men, to the number of twenty or thirty, attack a private dwelling house, on a moonlight night, in the very heart of the town, commit personal violence on its inmates, and carry off every thing they can lay their hands on. Thanks to the activity of one or two good European officers, some of the villains were subsequently ap-

prehended, and are just now being disposed of by a jury. These little incidents, you will say, somewhat break the monotony of things ; but you are wrong. They are of such daily occurrence (in a somewhat modified form) as to excite the smallest possible attention. People have got tired of talking of them, just as they have of steam, which may be said to be out of the market. We hear that the *Hindostan* is coming, and shall be truly happy to see her, but few trouble their heads further on the subject. Squabbling and vexatious delays have brought us to this complexion. The *India* came in the other day from Suez, bringing 19 passengers, and not making a bad voyage for her, (35 days) considering that part of her voyage she had unfavourable weather. I may mention, that we are going to have a steamer of 250 horse power, monthly, from this to the Straits, originating with the firm of Messrs. Mackay and Co. It will be an immense advantage to our invalids, who are in the habit of taking this trip, and will of course expedite our communication with China, which everybody but *Qui Hies* will think of even more importance. What is doing at home with regard to the proposed Bank of Asia? Is there really any chance of the steam being got up in *that* matter? I assure you we want a second

here much. We have but one, the Bank of Bengal. There is a second called the Union Bank, but it is rather, as far as one can judge from its accounts current, an Agency House on an immense scale. A Chartered Bank here is a great desideratum, and *must* come before long either from London or elsewhere.

The last 'statement' of Union affairs shows a circulation of Rs. 1,24,005 and the trifling item of Rs. 97,62,935:13:0 out on security of goods, standing crops, &c. They would smile in Lombard street, I fancy, at the idea of calling *this* banking. A good deal of discussion has taken place on this subject, and indeed it has been one of the few local topics that have excited the slightest interest of late; among which, however, may be numbered the extraordinary influx of GRIFFS, who just now fill a large space in the public eye, especially of an evening, when people go to 'see the order of the Course,' which is crowded with them, riding cock-horse in all the pride of new uniforms and spurs: a malicious, sour-tempered old fellow said the other evening, as a troop of them went by with their caps cocked, while two more in a hack-buggy ran against his carriage—'D—n the fellows—this *is* bringing the Cabul disaster home to us'; alluding of course to the

reinforcements required by the fatal destruction of officers. The Queen's 62<sup>d</sup> are on the wing for Dinapore. They have been a popular regiment here : Major Reed and the officers were invited the other evening to a ball and supper at the Town Hall, which went off with considerable *eclat*. I have spoken of red-coat arrivals. I must not omit to mention the in-comings (personal, not pecuniary) of gentlemen of another profession, to wit, the Law. Within a very few months we have added three to our Bar, and including the new Advocate General, three more are on their way ! By all means come yourself, if your prospects have lost a tittle of their promise, and strongly urge any half dozen of your particular friends to try their fortunes here. There is a fine field for profit, if they can get a large practice ; and for patience and philosophy if they cannot, as all our Leaders are immortal, or apparently look to belong to the Heathen Mythology. They sadly want some consideration for their native home household gods.

Of the gentlemen in black there is no great news. The Bishop is about to take his departure on a tour to the Straits, Bombay and Madras, and will of course be absent some months. Several of these good men have revived 'The awful disclo-

sures of Maria Monk,' and they are regularly advertised in a Christian publication as a check to Romanism, and I suppose Puseyism, which is said to approximate closely to the Scarlet Lady. It is a pity our Clergy do not show more reliance on themselves, and 'the Word,' to stem the current of disaffection, which really seems to be running rapidly in all parts of the Protestant world. It is lamentable to think they should pin their orthodoxy to the petticoat of a strumpet, and swear by the veracity of a wretched creature who denied her own father and mother, and who was only protected from the consequences of multifold perjuries by being of doubtful sanity. But I dare say you know that these 'Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk' are a verbatim copy (names only changed) of a book published in 1731, called 'The Gates of Hell opened, or a Developement of the Secrets of Nunneries,' and yet some of our Reverend Divines of Calcutta, without a blush, are hawking the filthy obscene imposition at Rs. 2 a copy. Slanders which a New York religious (?) periodical first gave birth to, a Calcutta religious periodical is attempting to reanimate after they have been dead and damned nearly seven years. This, is very sad, but it is the truth, and will show you that Calcutta is behind the rest of the world,

notwithstanding our overland communication, that Mr. Mangles writes in the *Edinburgh Review*; and that we sent Mr. Dyce Sombre, the Crichton of the London *Atlas*; to marry an Earl's daughter, and represent Indian interests in Parliament.

And now my dear old cock I must cease crowing. If I havn't given you a chanticleering *note*, but rather a dull *letter*, blame the times, or the fever, or the calomel, or the senna, of which I have spoken above, with a shudder that makes my manuscript all but illegible. I did not like to break in on the regularity of my correspondence, and I therefore sat down at, as it were, a quarter less eight bells, to run you off a rough yarn—and here you have it. As for Charlotte, all I can say in addition to what I have said before, is—

“ My Charlotte !,” with thy name this song began—

“ My Charlotte,” with thy name thus much shall end—

I see thee not,—I hear thee not,—but none

Can be so wrapt in thee ; thou art the friend,

To whom the shadows of far years extend.

\* \* \* \* \*

Just mention this to her, with the *et ceteras*,  
and believe me my dear Crony, with lively recollections of the family circle,

Your's faithfully,

AN IDLER.

MY DEAR CHARLOTTE,

*Calcutta, Sept. 16, 1842.*

Although it is some time since, as Cowper says, the heralds of a noisy world, with news from all nations lumbering at their backs, brought me your last letter, I have never for a day forgotten I am in your debt for four sides of the most interesting matter, written in the most lady-like hand, the Italian style I think it is called ; but for no other reason that I am aware of, than that comparatively few people can read it. I rebuked your uncle some time ago for his scrawling, but I have a share of reproof left for you. A number of dots connected by long scratches, with an occasional flourish like the tail of a kite, is a laborious study to the uninitiated, of whom I am one, never having had but one female correspondent except yourself, young enough to take the trouble it must cost to be perfectly unintelligible under a fortnight's study with a strong glass. Have the kindness to write as legibly as you would if replying to an offer of marriage from a man with a title and five thousand

a year, and an animal you had no objection to tie yourself to for life.

And now my ill-temper is exploded, and I intend to continue in the blindest of humours till something occurs to ruffle my equanimity, which I hope will not be the case until I have replied to some of the twenty-seven questions you have crowded together in the last page and a half of your letter, from which pleasant indication of girlhood, quite as satisfactorily as from your not having changed your name, I know that the years we have been parted have not made you a woman. Women in their correspondence—except when they are applying to their husbands for money,—are very chary of interrogatories; they prefer the didactic style, and I must confess preach so prettily, lecture so attractively, and reprove so touchingly, that I do not hesitate in confessing to you (as I expect you will one day be made a woman of, that is, become a wife) I would rather have one letter from a married woman than twenty-one from the smartest spinster in existence. I leave out of all consideration that portion of your sex who remain girls till forty, and never become women after, but die old maids, because unless when they travel in their own custody to make books and a livelihood, they never write at all, save only to point out to a



married sister or some intimate friend how ruinously she is bringing up her children ; in this department they are very great.

To your first query what I think of India ? As people do not judge of a country as they do of a cheese, by a little bit, I am afraid I cannot give you any satisfactory answer ; but if you will be content with hearing what I think of Calcutta, and how I like it, I will attempt to satisfy you. Perhaps I had better in the first instance tell you what sort of a place this City of Palaces is. The native part of the town is, as far as my small experience of it goes, hovels and filth with occasional houses and filth : that part which is inhabited by Europeans and Natives and devoted to trades is considerably better, while the portions almost exclusively tenanted by European shopkeepers, or the portions here and there I should rather say, for we have no particular ‘ quarters’ as in Cairo and other cities, are all good, and some fine. Old Court-House street, if that may be called a street which has neither pitching, nor paving, nor asphalte, nor wooden blocks, is a noble thoroughfare but of no great length, and Tank Square, which is at right angles with it, is equal in size to some of our largest in London, but not equal to Lincoln’s Inn *Fields*, as it is still called.

The houses, for the most part, are lofty and imposing, and a very fine range of buildings, originally devoted to Writers on their arrival, and during their studies, preparatory to their 'passing' in the languages, but now let off as is the Albany, forms one side.

The worst of Calcutta is, that it is a dirty, and particularly unsavoury place, not as bad as Lisbon by a great deal, but you remember we agreed we would rather remain for life at Cintra, where

"Fruits of fragrance blush on every tree,"

than be doomed to one twelve month's residence in that town, which Byron says—

"Sheening far, celestial seems to be;"

and which, in preference to any city I have ever seen, might be called the City of Palaces. The 'west end' of Calcutta is in the north-east, and is, as I dare say you know, called Chowringhee. Here are the only houses, but they are many, which can entitle the city to its high sounding title. Considerable partiality however is necessary, or one would say whoever prepared the patent indulged in considerable latitude of expression. The houses are large, and for the most part lofty; and their white colour, and magnificent green verandahs, give them a picturesque and imposing appearance, standing, as each does, alone

in its own grounds, and thus making the most of itself. But it would be difficult to find one mansion that singly could be called a palace, without an extravagant burlesque on building. It is the number presenting themselves to the eye at one glance that alone reconciles us to the pretending title, and which I think, almost invariably, leads the stranger to pronounce it well deserved. There is no domestic building in Calcutta to be compared for an instant to the Duke of Sutherland's house, built, as you will remember, for his late Highness of York; but as that was intended for, and is, a ducal residence, perhaps it is hardly fair to make the comparison. I only do it, that you may have some idea what our palaces are *not*. I am hardly inclined to except our Government House, but if I ought to do so, it is certainly *the* exception. It just occurs to me, that I can give you a good idea of our best Chowringhee residencies. Take the United Service Club House, or the Athenæum, and place it in a garden well supplied with trees, add a balcony to the top story on two, or, if you please, three sides of the house, and close it in two-thirds of the way down by verandahs, adding rolling blinds thereto. Your balcony must be lofty, and of sufficient width to form an excellent promenade for three or four

persons abreast. The roof must be supported by columns, Ionic or Doric as your taste dictates, and your balcony itself by pillars or arches: I think you will then have a grander looking 'palace' than you could get here for £40 sterling per month, but very much after their fashion. So much for our west end.

The Richmond of Calcutta, as I believe Garden Reach has been before called, is down the river, and not up, as the Sunday paradise of Cockney land. The houses, which are pretty much as those I have described, stand in large compounds or small parks, and for the most part on the right side of the river, and close to the bank, a lawn only intervening: the left shore has but two or three European houses between this and Calcutta. One is the residence of the Superintendent of the Botanical Gardens, the river frontage of which is very great, and marked by lofty trees. Then comes Bishop's College, a fine building, and then—glittering banks of emerald green—a very pretty line, if I were poetical instead of prosy.

This approach to Calcutta by water, on a clear evening, just before sunset, is one of the most beautiful pictures of its style nature ever painted. A fine river, fine luxuriant shores (however rank

the luxuriance) green lawns, lofty trees, and in the distance a forest of masts numberless as those in 'the Pool,' if you know such a part of the Thames, and Government House standing forth more prominently, I think, than from any other point of view. A person must be as insensible as a pickled pilchard to see this scenery to advantage, and not admire it. One is impressed thus early favourably towards the city, before in fact he puts his foot on shore. These houses and grounds too are eloquent of wealth and luxurious ease, but observe I do not say but they may lie. One would hardly think of stifling offices, sugar, indigo, silk, and molasses, much less of bankruptcy and nothing in the pound, when looking upon them; but such disagreeable realities are sometimes a part of their history.

I might introduce you to the inside of our houses, but beyond their superior size, their punkahs, their beamed ceilings, their matting, and their plain white walls, there is nothing to distinguish them from well furnished domiciles of moderately wealthy people at home: with these exceptions an Anglo-Indian drawing-room, dining room, and 'my lady's dressing-room,' are pretty much the same as yours; the same expensive nonsenses in the first, the same substantial utilities in the second, and the same desirable conveniences

in the third. Notwithstanding the heat, if Calcutta could be said to have any country around it, if one could occasionally 'drive out of town,' it would not be such a disagreeable residence after all for people who do not care about society. But unfortunately we have neither country nor society. You will not misunderstand me : we have fields innumerable, as we have parties, but the one have no *roads*, and the other are without the *ways* we are accustomed to, who have lived in smaller and more cultivated neighbourhoods. I mean only the cultivation of friendly feeling, for in the polish, the outward show, the varnish of society, there can be nothing to object to. Society here, my dear Charlotte, means a little of great balls, and a great deal of large dinner parties. At home we call this company ; no one better than yourself can understand the difference. I do not speak positively, but I believe there are not half a dozen families in Calcutta, if two, sufficiently intimate to visit with the same absence of formality that leaves friends at home without a shackle, and which indeed is the charm of intimacy. It may be said that the habits of the country are different, which, after all, only means that the people are different, for there is certainly nothing in the climate to enforce the formality that rules them.

Morning calls are the most methodical tits for tats, and I apprehend a lady would as soon think of violating the order of 'calling,' as she would break her marriage vow if blessed with a husband, or refuse to take one when she had a desirable opportunity if a spinster. The result of these morning measured civilities and evening of-courses, is, that society and the country, which I introduced together, are equally flat and uninteresting. In England, we have the high road of company for the mass of our acquaintance, but we have also the quiet bye-ways of friendly intercourse in which to stroll with a friend, where satins and velvet waistcoats are discarded, and where people don't talk as if they suspected themselves overheard by the emissaries of an anti-social inquisition; where the flowers of life blossom as plentifully as those of nature in the beautiful (but unfortunately, very muddy) lanes of our dear Devonshire. If you do not think this very pretty, you may take my word for it is very true.

But I must not omit to mention, after what may appear an unfavourable picture, that hospitality is unbounded. A new-comer will rarely want an offer of board and lodging (but he finds his own servants and washing) if he knows, or has an introduction to, any house-keeper. This does not prevail to

the extent it did ten or fifteen years ago ; not that people are less kind, but, that Calcutta is more civilised. It had then as places of public entertainment only Punch Houses, it has now several Hotels, of which *Spence's* is immeasurably the best. Formerly a man would have been ex-paled if he had been known to locate himself in a public house on the strength of his own means. For Public House, read, if you please, Hotel, for I fancy it was less the character of the place that would have been considered, than the fact that he must be nobody if nobody knew him : *mais nous avons changé tout cela*, and the first people (myself among the number) are from time to time to be found in our hotels. They confess it without a blush, and people who feel their consequence, which means everybody, write it even upon their cards.

If I were asked to account for this indifference to the realities of social intercourse, I should ascribe it to that 'visible god'—Gold. Every one who comes out here comes for the express purpose of making money, and it is the absorbing consideration of all minds. If it were altogether unworthily so, the great expense at which many live would be a puzzle and a contradiction : but this is not the case ; they do not covet it as misers, but as the means, and the only means, by



which they may return to their native land. They expect a competency, or something more, in a few years, and that their memory of, and interest in, their home friends and associates will survive their expatriation : there is little necessity then, and less inducement, for forming close intimacies, which divide attention, and consume time. Man is a gregarious animal, and cannot altogether estrange himself from the world, but he is also a calculating one, and will therefore have as little to do with others as is consistent with the first duty he considers he owes himself. People here do not look upon society as a luxury to be enjoyed, but as a necessary variation to the monotony of existence ; as they walk, ride, or drive, not for the beauty of the scenery around them, but to preserve their health. That home

‘ The resort

*Of love, of joy, of peace and plenty, where,  
Supporting and supported, polish'd friends,  
And dear relations mingle into bliss,*

should allure them, is natural ; and that the only means of regaining it should so possess them as to render them comparatively indifferent to other attractions, is not altogether surprising. Then we must remember, that husband and wife are frequently separated, parents and children almost invariably, and that the hope of a re-union and the

happiness it promises distract the attention from, if they do not disincline it for, intimacies which the very success they are struggling to secure will probably put an end to for ever. You will naturally infer that mere formalities characterize the Mercantile and Civil-Professional bodies more than any others, they having better reason to be more sanguine of their escape than members of the Services : this is the case.

Leaving society and resuming the other branch of my paragraphical discourse, we have no country. I only know two or three good roads any where in the neighbourhood of Calcutta—one leads to Garden Reach, running nearly parallel with the river, but not commanding a view of it ; another to Barrackpore, where the Governor General has a second residence, but to get to which you must drive through about four miles of native filth, if you would go the nearest way, and another leading no where in particular as it is, or is called, the Circular Road, a suburb, but by which you may reach the one I have last mentioned. Add to these the roads that are cut round and across the plain on which the city stands, and driving about which, it is no easy matter to get out of sight of your own house, and the rides and drives available to the public

are told. If a friend were desirous to show to a stranger all that he might look for of country about Calcutta, he would have to take him to the roof of his house after the third or fourth evening, and point to the hazy distance where venturous spirits occasionally hunt jackalls, or across the river where very green Griffs go snipe-shooting with the thermometer at 120°. But people accommodate themselves to circumstances, and instead of staying at home two or three times a week, because they cannot vary their course, they show every evening in the year, when not prevented by sickness or domestic accidents—births, deaths, or marriages.

The principal resort is about a mile or a mile and a half of road by the side of the river, and here Calcutta is to be seen as the sun is setting, and for a short time after, in all its out-of-door glory. You have heard, I dare say, a great deal about the style and elegance of this Oriental metropolis; where they exist I have not yet discovered, unless it be in dining rooms before twenty or five and twenty massive looking covers are removed for half that number of guests—they manage the show of a dining table extremely well—at any rate it is not on the drive. Our carriages, with some few exceptions, and our horses with fewer, are rather below

than above a glass-coach turn-out from any respectable yard in London; and as for our gigs—buggies is the word here—they have a style, but it is exclusively their own, and one that would not be considered exactly the thing in Hyde Park. But if vehicles of all descriptions were irreproachable, the black livery of the servants would sink them below hackney-coach and cab par. Nature gave it them, and their masters and mistresses rarely supply any other; or if they do, they allow them to present it to their uncle, or some other relation. Coachmen of all countries have a sort of pride about them which lifts them a little above their class, and ours are no exception; but the footmen—not so called here, because they *might be* with great propriety, seeing that they generally run—are for the most part dirty fellows in dirty rags: when they ride, it is after the fashion of an urchin behind a hackney coach, doubled up as if they were skulking from a visitation of the whip.

But you would rather hear something of the people inside than the people out. There is nothing remarkable in them in this phase of their existence: they no more startle by their fashion than do the vehicles in which they lounge, although unquestionably the drive is a show-road. The first great object of the hour is, I believe, to

take the air ; the second, to<sup>d</sup> be seen, that dear friends may have the pleasure of knowing you are not dead since last evening ; the third, to nod at them in token of the high esteem in which you continue to hold them ; and the fourth, to impress all that you don't know with the idea of the enormous fatigue you are undergoing for their gratification. A large proportion of the males equestrianize languidly, and that they might not be unnecessarily shaken, Lord Auckland, who was a most kind-hearted man, had a ride turfed for them by the side of the carriage road, that they might take their exercise with as little inconvenience as possible, without being lost to the company, which was the case when they had to canter a mile over good turf to the Race-course.

You have asked me whether I think you would like India? I answer without hesitation—No ! I am unable to suggest one single reason for any girl of good sense and feeling liking it; and I suspect very few do. It is bad enough for married women who have their families about them ; for spinsters who are necessarily dependent, I should imagine it just endurable, and no more, unless it so happens that they come out to their parents. A girl here is a prisoner all day, and if she is eddied about in the circles of parties,

something of a show the best part of every night. If she does not fancy this whirl-a-gig existence, but prefers a tamer monotony, it is too tame—dinner at eight and bed at ten, for domestic people keep remarkably early hours, and really domestic evenings are things non-existent: I speak as to the rule, and not doubting exceptions. What can be more hateful to a girl who has been accustomed to live in the country, and pass half her time in the open air with her flowers, and her birds, and her schools, and her humble neighbours, than to be immured in a darkened room from eight or nine o'clock in the morning till six or seven in the evening, then to have an hour of such freedom as can be enjoyed in a carriage, and then to return to apartments glaring with light, crowded with people, as dull as well-dressed mobs always are, and as hot as an engine room in a steamer. What can be worse than this, except the knowledge that to-day and to-morrow and next day bring but a repetition of unprofitable oppressive yesterday. If I were required to select young ladies for this market, I should pick them from one class, and that would be the unfortunate dress-makers of London. Dark rooms and nothing to do all day, (but novels and that 'ingenious idleness' worsted-work—a ready resource

if required) and music and dancing and beaux, all night, would so contrast with the slavery and wretchedness of their former existence, that Calcutta would be a paradise to them, and they would probably love me through life for my philanthropy something better than they would love their husbands.

A young lady, Charlotte, coming out to this country is said, and I believe very truly, to come for a husband. This she is aware of, and if it does not shock her—as why should it—it places her in a less agreeable light than she might wish, and unquestionably tends to make her artificial in all she says and does. I have always considered that the spirit in which this charge or reproach—for to such it amounts—is as stupid as it is indelicate. It is perfectly true, but the stupidity is in not seeing that a girl is only doing her duty, and the indelicacy is in making such a subject a popular topic. It is the first duty of parents after having brought up their children in the way they should go, to see and get them settled for life; the boys in some profession or trade, the girls in matrimony, which is ‘Heaven’s law,’ ‘mysterious law,’ as Milton calls ‘wedded love,’ though for my part I see nothing mysterious in it—except perhaps its rarity. About this there can be no doubt, nor any that

it is the duty of children to assist their parents to the utmost of their power in all good works. Yet one would really imagine that it was a just reproach to a girl that she ever ventured to think of a husband, much less to look for one ; and Heavens ! what a shocking thing ! when not having found him in one part of the world, she should be content to take her chance in another. I have never been able to discover a great deal of difference between a young lady coming to India single, and gadding about, away from home, at Bath, Cheltenham, Brighton, Harrowgate, or any other place where she may have friends and look for admirers, and varying her travels by running over to Paris, Rome, Vienna, or any other gay capital where her countrymen herd at proper seasons. Yet who ever says, that Miss is hunting for a nominal lord and master, though every body knows she is, quite as diligently as her sister, cousin, or acquaintance who comes round the Cape. But though I rate the fair creatures who sport here as highly as those who bag the same game with the same license at home, I do not think them wise in coming : they diminish their chances of comfort, and perhaps I might truly say, happiness. The majority of marriages where ages are suitable are imprudent ones, that is, they entail all the inconveniences of im-



prudent ones at home, with the addition of those belonging to a country where not to have what elsewhere would be called luxuries, is not to have necessaries. Can you conceive anything more wretched than a girl marrying for love an Ensign or a Lieutenant with pay not more than sufficient for his own maintenance, or more disgusting than her taking a Major or Colonel old enough to be her grandpapa for a settlement. A young Civilian is considered not a bad match for a girl who has been out a couple of years without an offer, and if she be obstinate, and will have her own way, her friends will uphold it as ‘not so bad,’ even though she be a novelty; for, say they—alluding to the Civil Pension Fund—‘he is worth Rs. 300 a month dead or alive.’ The same may be said of a confirmed flirt, who terrifies all but the very young and very daring. But looking to result it is astonishing, considering the matter of business that courtships are made by those who are protecting the lady, and their general brevity, that there should be so much apparent happiness between the parties. Shakespear says—

Marriage is a matter of more worth,  
Than to be dealt in by attorneyship ;

but I do not think it is considered so in this part of the world ; yet happiness, or a very peaceable

substitute, indifference, renders known disaffection as rare here, I believe, as in any community in the world. If I were not writing to a young lady, I should think this discourse on marriage might be very tedious; but I know it is a subject that the young of the soft sex, after they have done with dolls and governess, and are once 'out' with the sanction of their mothers, do not readily tire of, and you have a right to know what I think of it here, since you evidently show some inclination to brave the observations of your ill-natured friends at home, and have indirectly invited advice. But whether you come or not, wherever you wed, remember this, that he was wise for all generations on this subject, who wrote the question

'What do you think of marriage?'

and supplied the answer—

'I take 't as those that deny purgatory :  
It locally contains or heaven or hell ;  
There's no third place in it.'

I have told you something about Calcutta, that is its external appearances : as to the place I know I am not wrong,\* and as to the people, if they are not what they seem, it is no fault of mine. But as a community they have some distinguished traits, among which charity and liberality towards the foibles of one another, perhaps

the noblest phase of that virtue, are conspicuous. No deserving object in distress ever wants substantial relief, and no eccentricities which would make a man or woman notorious elsewhere are here taken notice of—unless in a very quiet way. Scandal is a thing never dreamt of, and gossiping tittle-tattle is like the shares in most of our public speculations, at a discount. A lady may be out in her carriage after dusk, with a beau on horse-back beside it, as often as she pleases, and no one even wonders ; or a gentleman may call three times in a month where there is a single girl, and not a soul thinks it suspicious. The charities I have alluded to are perhaps equally certain, but, of course I place greater reliance on the first, because it is proved to demonstration by the enormous sums that are continually paid in hard cash. People here do not, as your great ones do at home, put down their names to subscriptions for imposing sums—properly so called, since they never intend to pay them—unless indeed it be to ‘Testimonials’ to distinguished men, the impression of whose worth’ does not always survive their departure. The tone of the public mind is liberal in all things. In politics a man would be as difficult to be found who avowed himself a Tory, as twenty years ago would have been

a Radical. In religion, we are fully as tolerant as the world is in its other quarters, and our religious publications display no more venom and rancour than invariably belong to this department of literature all over the world.

We are extremely liberal to the natives of the country, placing them in offices of trust and importance, which it is possible their descendants in a hundred years (if everything goes well, and steamers are established between this and Suez by that time) may be able to fill respectably. Taking them as they are, we pay them about five times as much as they are worth ; but this is a consequence of the system which lavishes preposterous sums on fairer skinned officials. If the native character has been elevated by European influence and example, it might not be complimentary to write what it must have been two centuries ago, but it is fair to conclude, that if the progression be not at a very much increased rate, the *national* character will be respectable about the time of the Millenium. Sir Charles Forbes said some few years ago he would as soon take the word of a Hindoo as of an Englishman, or something very much to the same effect. He is a generous, amiable old gentleman, and probably remembered that a quarter of a century before he had made a princely fortune in this country.

The vices of its people had worn themselves out of memory, and their affected simplicity of character alone remained. Either this was the case, or instead of advancing in morals they have retrograded woefully, for if there be a crime in the calendar more common than another—more plentiful than blackberries in autumn—it is perjury, yet such is our liberality here, too, that it is of all crimes the most rarely punished.

This is a touch of native character, since I have given you a rough sketch of ourselves; but with Natives a lady, of course, has nothing to do beyond box-wallahs, who are itinerant haberdashers, and domestic servants. The former are great rogues, but they are endured by heads of families as something less horrible than the bills of French and English milliners, and which would make an *artiste de mode* in Bond-street or Burlington Gardens think herself a fool, or her sister-*artiste's* customers in India a prolific branch of that large family. The latter (the servants) are all liars and most of them thieves, but you will remember they don't know what truth is, by its value, and might ask the question seriously which Pilate did jestingly: as for thieving, like a lady's waiting woman, or a gentlemen's valet, who makes away with superfluous stock, they 'don't call it so,'

but consider all they can lay their hands on without detection as waifs and strays, to which they have a right as perquisites of office.

I had intended, my dear Charlotte, to have discussed fifty other topics, but I have just now neither room nor time; besides I think you will not have read all this without a yawn. Commend me to our mutual friends, and believe me—past, present, and future.

Your's very sincerely,

AN IDLER.

MY DEAR MACKENZIE,

*Calcutta, October 17, 1842.*

The last month has been one of gratifying triumphs: China has been brought to its senses, and Afghanistan put under our feet. Much of the former news you will have learned before this reaches you, as the *Auckland Steamer* was dispatched direct from Hong Kong to Suez. Moreover, I sent you, twelve days ago, an extra *Overland* issued by the *Calcutta Star*, in consequence of the Government dispatching a Steamer from Bombay in the middle of the month. Indeed since then we have had no news from the Celestials, though much gossip from arrivals and letters. Whether the vermilion pencil will be put to the Treaty sent to Peking, must remain a matter for your speculation another month, unless we should have dispatches within the next few hours.

I apprehend the Government at home will be delighted with what Pottinger has done. I think it would have been as well if he had not shirked

the opium question, but opinion varies on this point, and some here think he was quite right in not meddling with it. His own feeling was, that he had nothing to do with it; that he had not been carrying on an opium war, but one to secure satisfaction for the gross insults offered to the Majesty of England. The redress obtained all will say is most ample, not only with regard to its pecuniary amount, but the acknowledgment of perfect equality on the part of 'the outer barbarians,' and the establishment of five open ports. England ought to stand very high with the whole civilized world for the honourable, and wholly unselfish part she has played, in thus unlocking the treasures of knowledge and unbounded commerce to her rivals as freely as to herself. The war, it cannot be denied, arose out of our violation of the fiscal laws of China, though the daring conduct of a proud and self-relying people gave us the advantage of saying we fought in a better cause. The way it was for a long time carried on was called, and looked very like, a system of buccaneering, but we had not at once the power to strike a decisive blow, and perhaps, after all, these flying visits of destruction on their coast, progressive in their disasters to the Chinese, may have impressed the Government more forcibly



with the folly of resistance,\* than if we had passively augmented our force for one great demonstration. Another thing is to be remembered, that we were on the coast of a terra incognita, and only by progressive steps could we advance with safety. Had we at once landed a large force at the head of the Gulf of Petcheli, and marched towards Peking, the risks would unquestionably have been greater, and the results could not have been more satisfactory; besides, we have perhaps wounded their vanity now, and taught them to respect us, instead of exactly trampling on their necks and making them abhor us. We cannot beat too little (using the rod when absolutely necessary) the child we would have loved us, and we cannot coerce too mildly (insisting on our point) a people with whom we would maintain a profitable connection. Whatever may have been the commencement of the war, whatever its progress—and *quo homines tot sententiæ*, I do not think opinion will be divided as to the honourable character of its conclusion.

In Afghanistan every thing has gone equally well. It would be tedious were I to go through details, for the Paper I shall send you will supply the fullest particulars.

The disasters of last year have been nobly redeemed, thanks to Lord Auckland, who made all

the necessary preparations before he left this country. Had he remained another year you would probably have had the good news you now receive months ago.

Let me direct your attention to the accounts of General Nott's march to Cabul from Candahar, and General Pollock's from Gundamuck. The former found our soldiers who were taken at Guzhnee, when that fortress fell, slaves, and happily liberated them all; the latter's path was strewed with the bones of our gallant fellows who were slaughtered in the Passes, a large proportion of them having evidently been murdered after all resistance was at an end, scores of them being found collected on the same spot with their skulls fractured. It has been admitted by the only two Journals in India that have upheld the Afghans, for I can say nothing less, that have exalted these barbarians into patriots fighting inch by inch for the freedom of their beloved mountains, it has been admitted, I say, that there was policy in revisiting Cabul, but they think it should have been a march of colours and music, and not one of retribution. Thank God, it has been otherwise, and that a lesson has been read these cut-throats which will be handed down to their children's children. Guzhnee has been razed to the earth, as far as fourteen explosions could

accomplish the work of destruction, and that Cabul will escape is not certain, but it is said it is to be spared. I would rather fifty Guzhnees had escaped without losing a stone from their lowest turret. At every step our force has advanced, the prowess of the British arm has been proved on the miscreants who have dared to wait the blow. Sixteen thousand men under Akhbar, with all the advantage of their position, were cut up or dispersed—one lesson which up to that moment the rascals had to learn, and which has already yielded its fruits in the fact that their leader is a miserable fugitive, without a friend ; indeed I have this moment received a letter which states that he has been seized by the Hazarehs who brought in our prisoners from Bamean, and that he will be forthwith delivered over to General Pollock. I am afraid this news is too good to be true, but I may hear more before I close my letter. If he should be taken he will as a matter of course be hanged, and we want this only to close accounts with Afghanistan. The gentle creature's positive orders to Salah Mahomed Khan who had our people in charge at Bamean, was to move them away without loss of time, and to cut the throats of such as it would be any trouble, from wounds or sickness, to carry on. But the prisoners are safe, Captain Bygrave alone

excepted, who was taken off by Akbar after his defeat by Pollock, or, as it is said, accompanied him as a point of honour. If this be so, it was chivalry indeed. Captain Troup made his escape at the same time. The letter I have above alluded to mentions that Captain Bygrave is reported to have come in shortly after the other prisoners, but this is hardly probable, as Akhbar's motive in keeping him can only have been to communicate with us, though what the rascal can hope from communication I know not, since he was long since informed that terms for himself were quite out of the question.

The happy news of the delivery of the prisoners was published by the *Calcutta Star* in an *Extra* on the morning of the 15th instant, and the *Eastern Star* of the following day mentions that it had received a letter announcing their arrival at General Pollock's Camp. It adds, 'the meeting between Sale and his wife and daughter was a noble sight.' Noble it must have been. I think there could hardly have been a dry eye when the gallant old soldier received in safety his long lost family. And Lady Sale! The Queen, we hear, has been moved to admiration by her heroic bearing through her trials, hers *she* would never allow them to be; she suffered only in the common dishonour that

had overtaken the British name. I *know* that this noble woman's masculine mind and energy distinguished her to the last, and that her letters up to within three or four days of their release, when they were suffering much for want of provisions and clubbing their little all to procure them, and when the crisis of their fate was at hand, displayed unbroken courage. 'We want provisions' she said, 'but we will do without them, only send us a Brigade.' There is not one woman in a million / who would or could have played the part she has done, and when Victoria warms in her admiration of her, she only shares the feeling with her subjects in this part of the world.

Well, the Afghans satisfactorily thrashed and our captives liberated, there is not a voice this side the Cape which does not cry—Leave them alone in their shame. We have no advocates, no, not one, for staying a single month in the country. And we are not to do so. The proclamation from Simla is out. Our troops are to withdraw to the Sutlej immediately. So far so good, but the tone of the production is particularly objectionable. It is intended to assail the late administration, or if it be not, it is very unfortunately made to appear so. As a composition it is extremely faulty, since it says what it never could have been

desired to say ; a 'bungling in a state paper for which there is no excuse,' and if it be not positively ungrammatical, its inelegance is beyond question. Let us take the following paragraph :—

“The Chief believed to be hostile became a prisoner, and the Sovereign represented to be popular was replaced upon his throne; *but*, after events *which* brought in to question his fidelity to the Government *by which* he was restored, *he lost* by the hands of an assassin the throne he had only held amidst insurrections, and his death was preceded and followed by still existing anarchy.”

The ‘after events’ here alluded to may be in the cognizance of Government, but they have never been known to the public : we only know that the Shah was murdered on his first march towards the relief of Sale in Jullalabad : however this may be, it is clearly stated that the Shah was murdered by an assassin as the immediate consequence of being false to us ! We are then told of disasters unparalleled in their extent, unless by the errors in which they originated, and this word *originated* would strongly imply political blunders and not military ones. It is strange that two causes should be given for our disasters in one breath—the treachery of the king, and the incapacity of our rulers. You will also see on reference to the document the following passages :—

"The rivers of the Punjab and the Indus, and mountainous Passes, and the barbarous tribes of Afghanistan, will be placed between the British army and an enemy approaching from the west, if indeed such enemy there can be no longer between the army and its supplies.

"The enormous expenditure required for the support of a large force in a false military position, at a distance from its own frontier and its resources, will no longer arrest every measure for the improvement of the country and of the people."

This off-hand condemnation of his Lordship's predecessor requires a little notice. Considering what has actually been the state of the case ever since Ellenborough came to this country, and the means by which he has been enabled to crow, it appears to me as remarkable a piece of Conservative coolness as the history of the party could parallel. I am not going to bore you with any argument about false position, but I shall show you in a few lines that Lord Ellenborough is in that predicament. Taking it for granted that every thing was wrong when he came here,—that rivers and mountains and savage tribes were between our army and its supplies, what in the name of Heaven has the man done to remedy the smallest particle of the evil ! Nothing, literally nothing ! Do not forget that every man across the Indus was sent there before Lord Ellenborough was here,

that our reinforcements were despatched, and arrangement for supplies made before Lord Auckland left us, and that to the hour Pollock and Nott moved Lord E. never stirred a finger to strengthen them beyond, at the *eleventh hour*, sending to the former, camels, mules, etc. which, as far as we know, have never reached even Peshawur yet. Months and months of inactivity, owing to the vacillation of the Government—now come back—now stand fast—now go on—that is, if you like to do so on your own responsibility!—pretty previous conduct truly to justify sneers at the measures of others. Troops cut off from supplies! Why, here has this Governor General been for two-thirds of a year, and when Pollock moves, he is so crippled for carriage that he has to leave bag and baggage behind, and on his march shoot the over-worked animals, and destroy what they carry that it may not fall into the hands of the enemy. What then, in any shape or way, has Lord Ellenborough done to entitle him to rebuke others? If they had committed errors, did he do ought to redeem them? ' Would it not have been wiser that he had thanked God for successes, the glory of which from his position he was sure to share, rather than seize those successes, as if they had been the results of his own wisdom



and forethought, as an opportunity of lowering the character of a former government. If Shumsoodeen had waited for Nott at Guznee instead of, like an ass, leaving his Fort to fight him at a distance from it in the plains, and by a miracle—for nothing less could have done it—successfully repelled an assault; or if Akbar instead of anticipating the moment for his engagement had waited till he had us even at greater advantage in a more difficult defile, and had been successful—supposing *any* casualty had befallen us,—how would the matter have stood then? We had been giving months of time to the enemy without strengthening ourselves in any particular; nay, losing the power of action every day by the loss of our carriage cattle. With whom would have rested the fearful responsibility? But under determined leaders, and actuated by a spirit which no suffering could damp, our troops carried every thing before them. To them, and them alone, is every particle of praise due. Our Politicals have been cyphers, our great Political a round O. If by-gones were bad, he should have let them remain by-gones; he has attacked others, and will induce many to ask, as I have done, what he has accomplished himself?

Our troops then are returning ; but what, you will perhaps ask, of the great Army of Reserve ? I will tell you. It was agreed that it would be a very impolitic thing to persevere in, there being no urgent necessity for it, and it was decided it should not be, but a certain great man had invited so many pretty women to the *tumasha* at Ferozepore that he found it impossible to get off, so we shall have it on a smaller scale. An Army of Reserve, after the pacific proclamation ‘war if you dare !,’ to all States and people—we have done with it, unless you desire to see our resources—will be remarkably consistent, and a portion of that Conservative policy which the proclamation advertises, the first evidence of which is to be the devotion of every possible farthing to the improvement of the country. I shall be glad to see it.

And now enough of war in all conscience. People have begun to talk about balls and rejoicings, and when they are over, and some thousands of medals are distributed, and at least half a dozen ‘testimonials’ prepared and presented, Afghanistan will be forgotten in the home brilliances of a ‘Conservative’ administration. But one thing ought not to be forgotten,—a memorial of the dead, of the many gallant fellows whose bones are left among the savages who butchered them. This

subject has been discussed by correspondents in our papers, and indeed subscriptions have been commenced, but it is clearly a matter that ought to be taken in hand by the Government. I don't think there would be any great policy in erecting any out-door monument to them, for it cannot be denied it would recall scenes of disastrous defeat, but in one of our Churches—say in the new Cathedral which is in progress—a suitable monument might well be placed. But I say again, the Government and not the public ought to do this.

So much has the news which I have slightly sketched, and comments upon it, occupied the public mind, that little else has been thought of. The native holidays for the last seven or eight days have added to the dullness of ordinary life, and there is really little of chit-chat to communicate. I don't think your commercial friends will find the month's report particularly favourable, nor will the Indigo speculators get a much more accurate estimate of the out-turn than they had last month. I do not think it will be over mds. 70,000. The Governor General has intimated that prayers for rain in the Upper Provinces have been successful, and so the harvest will probably be better than was anticipated. The news from the other Presidencies is flat. The Marquis of Tweeddale

at Madras has followed Lord Ellenborough's example of reduction,—how grateful that word from a Tory, especially in a country where reduction cannot reach himself—and appointed a Finance Committee. • We may now say—

Strange that *no* difference there should be  
T'wixt Tweedledum and Tweedledee.

If there be no difference in the results of their Finance dabbling, the Marquis will be thought as much of a genius in that way as the Lord.

As I write, my dear Mackenzie, to give you the news, it would be folly to continue scribbling after I have exhausted it.

Believe me,

Your's faithfully,

AN IDLER.

---

MY DEAR ALFRED,

*Calcutta, November 18th, 1842.*

A letter would be nothing just now unless it were political. Afghan is yet *the* word and *the* thought here, and we find that at home even, amid war at your hearths, you can find time to think of the far East. I hope our legislators will remember India, after they have ceased to squabble about our policy. I wrote Mackenzie last month. At that time Lord Ellenborough's Peace proclamation had gone forth, and I commented upon it. It was a wretched affair as a state paper, ridiculously bombastic in tone while affecting the greatest simplicity; its composition would have disgraced a school boy of fifteen. But that was not the worst. It pledged our Cabinet to recognise '*any* Government approved by the Afghans themselves, which shall appear desirous and capable of maintaining friendly relations with neighbouring States.' This was to all intents to shake hands with Akhbar Khan, the villain who murdered

our Envoy, and, as I believe, was a party to the treacherous massacre of our troops on their retirement from Cabul. He was the most likely man to take first place on our backs being turned, and even though his father, Dost Mahomed, about to be released, might have been chiefly thought of when this shameful promise was given, it palliates it not a whit, for the *risk* of Akhbar's maintaining a popular rule even as against his father, and so coming within the terms of our recognition, ought never to have been encountered. Lord Ellenborough had no reason for supposing that Akhbar would yield precedence, or that he even cared a pice for his family, for he well knew that he had turned a deaf ear to the overture that had been made to him for an exchange of prisoners. In fact he is taunted with this by his Lordship in a subsequent Notification, in which the release of all *our* prisoners, the Dost and family, Akhbar's wife, etc. is promised. I have very little doubt he would have been better pleased had we kept the lot well looked after at Loodianah, and left the field to him.

But beyond the lowest deep we have a lower. 'Shame,' says the *London Times*, 'bitter shame, on any pacification which withdrew one soldier from Jellalabad while a single dependant of the British Government, Englishman or Hindoo, man,

woman or child remained in the power of their traitorous captor.' This shame the *Times* must loudly proclaim from one end of Europe to the other, for the order of withdrawal was written and published before Lord Ellenborough had heard of the release of a single captive of those in the neighbourhood of Cabul; nearly one hundred and fifty men, women and children, were in the hands of the ruthless Afghan when these words went forth—'The British army in possession of Afghanistan will now be withdrawn to the Sutlej'! By his Lordship's own admission treaty for their release had failed, and it depended only on what our arms might accomplish. Do you think it politic even that such a proclamation should have been made on the probability of our recapturing them. And mark, we did not do so. The prisoners had negotiated their own release, and were on their way towards General Nott's camp when they fell in with General Sale's force, which, lightly equipped, had been sent to look after them. Happily he met them at the nick of time, and dispersed a force that had pursued and assuredly would have retaken them. The Prisoners reached Camp on the 22d September; the proclamation was dated October 1st, only nine days after, a period altogether insufficient for the trans-

mission of the news ; besides, Captain Bygrave did not come in until about the 23th or 26th ! Thus you will see to what extraordinary good fortune we owe it that Lord Ellenborough had not to withdraw his proclamation instead of the army, for I can assure you, he has Generals in Afghanistan who would have dared to disregard it had it not been withdrawn, if our people had remained in the enemy's hands. No special pleading, no mystification can get rid of these damning facts—the order from Simla was dated the 1st of October *without any allusion to the prisoners at all*, either as speaking of their release or their expected release, was dated they were not in safety with late until the 21st September, and not in Camp at Cabul until the 22d, and that the news could not have travelled to Simla in nine days. General Pollock's dispatch to Simla announcing the prisoners being with Sale, and his second reporting their arrival at Cabul, were thirteen or fourteen days on the road. On the 5th October the Governor General says, 'Since the public Notification of the 30th ultimo' he had received the former, and in a Notification of the 7th, he acknowledges the latter ; their being with Sale was therefore not known before the 3d or 4th, at the earliest, nor their arrival before the



5th or 6th. As both events are mentioned on the 5th and 7th respectively, it is clear that had the first been known on 1st October it would have been alluded to. Again, then, I say, let your Journals, Whig and Tory, cry aloud that bitter shame which the *Times*' with prophetic soul foretold.

It has been attempted on the part of Lord Ellenborough, not by the Press, but by loud whispers transmitted through echoing channels, to make people believe that confusion, bewilderment and error, have been all on the part of the Press and the public, and that he has taken special pleasure in fostering them.

This won't do ; it is not plausible, and if it were, he has not been sufficiently clever to allow people even to believe it. When he takes his pen into his hand he commits himself, and unintentionally lets out the truth. It has been urged for him that he always intended to vindicate the honour of England in Afghanistan, that he never contemplated retirement until that solemn duty was performed. We are to believe that the first withdrawal order of 14th May last was a mere blind, put forth to mislead, never to be acted upon, and that with the same view General Pollock's force was left without carriage for months! Well, let it be so, we will admit it for the nonce,

and merely say that this Eton school-boy is a school-boy still, playing a game highly entertaining to himself and friends (if indeed he admits any to his confidence) with the character of his country and the safety of her subjects committed to his rule. I say we will admit this, but can we? We might have done so had he not indulged in a certain Notification which states in black and white, beyond the possibility of doubt, that he did *not* intend to re-establish the character of our arms—that he would have retired from Afghanistan without firing a shot or drawing a sword if he could have obtained the Prisoners (as is *now* intimated) but I think there is very good reason for believing that failure in this object is made the pretence under which the troops are stated to have advanced by *express authority*. We know that Nott was *ordered to retire with permission to advance*, and there is little doubt—I might say, none—that Pollock's movement was entirely the result of his own determination not to see the army disgraced, in as much as he made excuses for not retiring when he was ordered. But this Notification. You will ask what it says? Why this, and I pray you mark it:—

“The advance of the British Armies to Ghuznee and Cabul having led to the restoration to free-

dom of the British Prisoners in the hands of the Afghans, Dost Mahomed Khan, his wives and family, and the wife and family of Mahomed Akhbar Khan and many Afghan Chiefs, remain in the absolute power of the British Government, without having any means of procuring their liberation.

*“ To this condition of disgrace and danger has Mahomed Akhbar Khan reduced his father, and his wife, and his family, and the chiefs, his countrymen, by making war upon women, and preferring the continuance of their captivity and sufferings, for objects connected only with his own safety, to the general exchange of prisoners, which was offered by the British Government, and the consequent restoration to liberty of those whose honour and happiness should have been most dear to him.”*

I think you will agree with me, that this infers strongly that an exchange of prisoners might have settled the affair, because though the exchange would not necessarily have checked a just retribution, there has never been the slightest ground for suspecting that such a thing was *per se* thought of by Lord Ellenborough.

What you will think of affairs in this part of the world, I know not,—what *you* will think, I know, but I mean the public. All who read attentively

what our papers transmit will conclude this,—that but for the able men commanding our armies, a far more dreadful disaster, eternal disgrace, would have marked the closing of our connection with Afghanistan; than even the bloody massacre of nearly 11,000 human beings on our retirement from its capital. Lord Ellenborough is not the man for our times. To rule an Empire in which there are no parliaments to keep him right, is not quite the same as ruling an office; he is an active, bustling man, and is a good Superintendent of Police spoiled. The Cabinet he might have here in his Council, I have before told you he discards; his enormous error is in fancying that he has a natural aptitude for every thing, and that he sees further at a glance into a most difficult administration, than other men do who have looked at it for years with the spectacles of experience, and had them occasionally wiped by their superiors. I think it was Lord W. Bentinck who said, that the Government of India consisted of a Governor General who knew nothing about the country, and a Council that knew nothing about anything else. If this approached the truth, you will understand how necessary it is that a Governor General and his Council should assist each other.

Heaven has protected us hitherto, and as we have great ministrations to work out in this benighted country, may uphold us still. The most signal mark of its favour will be a new Governor General.

But let me do Lord Ellenborough justice. He means well, and has qualities that linked with sound judgment and ordinary discretion, would make him a valuable ruler. He is active, energetic and industrious, and I think thoroughly honest in his disposal of patronage. His object appears to be to reward merit wherever he finds it, and to distinguish the most deserving. If he could have submitted, I will not say to the control but counsel of men better informed than himself, he would have had a fair chance of a satisfactory career, but it is against his nature to listen, and his amazing confidence in himself prevents his seeing the slightest possible value in any one else. Yet men who are clear of him and do well, he is prompt to recognize, and, as I have said, reward. General Nott was an instance of this. He was slighted by the late administration, and probably undervalued, and Lord Auckland I think began to feel this before he left the country. Nott went to Afghanistan at the commencement of our unfortunate connection with that country,

and he has been there ever since. His command of Candahar and Lower Scinde, military and political, shew him to be a very able man. In his engagements with the enemy he has never been worsted, on the contrary, always thrashed them well, and between those risings which he was compelled to put down by force, he ruled so mildly, but so firmly, that he possessed the confidence of the people; the Agricultural portion carrying on their labours as if no enemy was in possession of the land. The way in which he took his force from Candahar to Ghuznee, and from Ghuznee to Cabul, defeating Shumsoodeen, destroying his fortress, and reaching his destination with hardly a casualty, has been very highly spoken of in some Military letters I have seen. Lord Ellenborough was delighted with him, and put him in orders for the Residentsip of Lucknow—a post worth nearly Rs. 6000 a month. General Pollock has also proved himself worthy his position, and has brought his fair share of honour to a family unusually distinguished. But his experience of the people he was among was much less than Nott's, and it has been said, that if he had been more prompt and decisive at Cabul, and, above all, had kept the Chiefs and others at a greater distance, he would have given even

higher satisfaction than he has done. It is thought, and there can be little difference of opinion upon the subject, that as we were to close all connection with the country, or, at any rate, that as a proclamation was to go forth repudiating all interference in the settlement of their affairs, leaving them, in official language, 'to create a Government amidst the anarchy which is the consequence of their crimes,' it was impolitic to allow Prince Futteh Jung (a son of Shah Soojah's,) to take his seat on the musnud, while our flag was flying in triumph on the highest point of the Bala Hissar, and our guns giving forth the brazen notes of victory. Pollock did *not* recognize him, but he permitted an act sure to be misconstrued. Equally an error has it been to leave guns and munitions of war behind with Shah Soojah's youngest son, Prince Shahpoor, a promising lad of about fifteen years of age: it is almost a certainty that he will be sent to the right about by Akhbar or Dost Mahomed, and they will fall into their hands, and be held as trophies. Amid the wholesome destruction that has taken place, the Bala Hissar has been spared!—the very place of all others that should not have had one stone left upon another; not that it was the scene of any treachery to us, unless the Shah was false, of which there has

never yet been any evidence, but because it was the stronghold of the city. Upon what pretence it was saved I know not, unless as shelter for the young Prince, and this again looks like a partiality, which the proclamation disavows.

But if these are Pollock's errors, he has brilliant services to set off against them, and both he and Nott, and the gallant Sale deserve high honours, and when we remember that Sir John Keane was ennobled for (by comparison) doing nothing, for he paid for the passages they have won by their swords, we have a right to expect the Queen's Government will not pass them over.

The Afghan tragedy has been brought to a close ; thank God it is over ! When the historian deals with it, the epitome of his work will be—the unwise policy that led us across the Indus, the blind confidence that brought insurrection like a thief in the night upon us, terrible disasters, and awful retribution !

From China we have had a little news since my last. As I expected, the Emperor was dissatisfied that the Opium question was not touched upon in the Treaty, and as he required that its importation should be forbidden at each and all of the five ports ceded as free, it is not probable he put the vermilion pencil to it before he was satis-



fied on this point. Pottinger had conceded what was required, but we have not heard of the signature being affixed, though there is now no reason to doubt that it will be. There can be no doubt his Majesty intends strictly to prohibit the drug, and I only hope our smuggling gentry may not get into trouble. As it is clear that the British Government will have no ground for seeking further satisfaction if its subjects voluntarily incur the penalty, though it be death, of breaking the laws of China, the Government ought at once to take some decisive step. While they are the producers people will buy, and play even the dangerous game of Sycee silver against a bowstring. They should withdraw from the trade altogether, and place a heavy export duty upon it to mark their discouragement, which would be satisfactory to China, and if it be said they would suffer in revenue, the reply is unanswerable—the Chinese have yielded so much, promising an enormous increase of commercial intercourse and general traffic, that the sacrifice might well be made if it were a question only of pounds, shillings, and pence.

And now a word or two of domestic news. Our cold season has set in, and people are beginning to be gay, that is, one hears of dinners and balls

without asking where they are. An attempt was made by the Press to get up some public rejoicings on account of our military triumphs, and considering the awful gloominess of last season consequent upon our disasters, the call might have been responded to. But it was not; why I don't know, unless because no one decidedly took the initiative. Have you ever observed a flock of sheep on the highway? If one jumps over any thing in their path, all the rest jump after. Well, we are very sheepish here; the newspapers threw this suggestion in people's way, but no leading sheep took notice of it, so the flock passed it unnoticed too. I should mention, however, that we had a 'Cabul Night' at the Theatre, which was very fully attended, and we had the gratification of looking on Ghuznee and the Bala Hissar, not perhaps as well painted as the Panorama of Cabul in Leicester Square, but sufficiently accurate for all who are not meditating a residence at either place. On second thoughts, I attribute the failure of festivities to the source whence the suggestion originated;—Lord Ellenborough says the Press is very *low*. One of our Journalists suggests, that he should abstain from writing for it, as it never cuts a worse figure than when publishing his State Papers.

But if we may not rejoice here, they may at Ferozepore. The Army of Reserve and the promised Christmas cheer are to bring together all the chivalry and beauty of the Upper Provinces. His Lordship is to entertain 700 guests at dinner on Christmas day—what will the Bishops say to that—and there will be no bounds to the eating, drinking, and, to use a very comprehensive word, the *skying* of the station. Then his Lordship's Durbar! You will see by one of his Notifications that the Dost and all the Afghan Chiefs released are to present themselves before him, to be made a gaze and show, like some curious beasts 'as was never seen the like of.' This is very unworthy us, making a parade of our clemency in setting at liberty those whom we cannot conveniently afford to keep, or do not desire to keep: any grace that might have attached to the act is marred by one of positive cruelty in lowering and making contemptible in the eyes of thousands, men who have had nothing to do with us but to fight us fairly when in the field, and live our prisoners up to this time, honourably treated in every respect. But Lord Ellenborough is such an eccentric gentleman, that after all, he may meditate a friendly chat with the Dost. Even this would be hateful to the old man, for it is said he

was not over-pleased with the way he was stared at when the Lion of the night at Government House, and when he was received with a guard of honour. The promise of an escort for the ladies to the frontiers of Afghanistan was very necessary, for not a soul of them would have got through the Punjaub without.

But I said I would be domestic. Is an earthquake domestic? I hope it will not often appear in that department of Calcutta News. But we have had a regular shocker. It came at about twenty-five minutes to ten on Friday night the 11th instant; to have been fashionable, it should have been a little later. As Shakespear says, Nature has been 'diseased,' and though happily she did not 'break forth in strange eruptions'

"The teeming earth

(Was) with a kind of colic pinch'd and vex'd,

By the imprisoning of unruly wind

Within her womb; which, for enlargement striving,

(Shook) the old beldame earth,

• and though it did not

Topple down

Steeple, and moss-grown towers,"

it tried the nerves of every man, woman, child, beast, bird, and, for all I know, fish, in the presidency. The dogs howled, the cattle were as possessed of devils, and those gentlemen in black,

the crows, showed loud *caws against the motion*. In sober truth, it was a frightful visitation, and the conviction must have been the same in every body's mind, that if the rocking of the houses lasted many minutes, the walls would fall in or out, as the case might be. There has been nothing experienced here like it for the last five and twenty years. The severity of the shock may be imagined from its being felt on board the *Agincourt* in the Bay of Bengal.

As nothing so startling as the Earthquake has occurred since, I shall conclude with it.

Believe me,

My dear Alfred,

Yours faithfully,

AN IDLER.

MY DEAR ALFRED,

*Calcutta, December 20th, 1842.*

Unless something startling occurs in the course of the next couple of hours, you will find this a remarkably dull letter. It is my love of regularity that enforces me to the task of writing about nothing; certainly next to nothing is all you will receive. *Ex nihilo nihil fit*—which freely translated means, you cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear,—is my apology, if indeed, I am called upon to apologize for what I can in no ways prevent. If the doings at Ferozepore, on the return of our Afghan Forces, had come off, I might have had some fun to tell you. At present we have only heard that our eccentric friend Lord Ellenborough intends to make himself as ridiculous as possible, and we know he has remarkable capacity that way. There is no end to the reports of the tomfooleries which it is said he has in contemplation, and in which of course he will wear the biggest cap. The Press, however, keeps him

a little in check, for what he affected to despise he is in no little fear of. They unanimously condemned the order for Dost Mahomed and the other Afghan prisoners attending the Durbar at Ferozepore, and said it was a pitiful triumph over a man who had good cause to be our enemy, and who had been honourably received and treated by us in captivity. His Lordship has consented to forego this bit of the show, and has received the Dost and party at Loodianah.

But the crowning folly of this man up to the present hour, is a proclamation touching certain Gates brought by Genl. Nott's force from Ghuznee. They originally belonged to the Temple of Somnauth in Guzerat, from whence they were carried 800 *years ago* by Mahmoud, the Destroyer, as he chose to be called. I pray you refer to the State Paper in which a Governor General disposes of this precious trophy which was removed from Mahmoud's tomb by his special direction. You will see he calls the gates 'this glorious trophy of successful war,' from which you, or any body else, might infer that the war was undertaken for their capture! The Princes and Chiefs of Sirhind, Rajwara, and Malwa, he calls his Brothers and his Friends, and India his adopted country. I suspect the ball

will not be at his feet very long, for he kicks it without either mercy or judgment, and in this last instance has fearfully wounded Mahomedan shins in his ridiculous attempt to please the Hindoos, in a matter about which they know as little, and care as much, as they do about the gates of Gaza. Our Sampson should have his hair cut, or he will play the very devil. One of our Journals has written a deal of nonsense about his being impeached for this Somnauth business, in an article about as stupid as the affair itself, but undoubtedly the Government at home ought to notice it, and I should imagine will at any rate take a hint from it as to the sort of man they have elected to an office requiring some little portion of discretion : I assure you it is expected here that My Lord will be gracefully relieved of his labours before long. You will observe that the gates are to be returned to 'the restored temple of Somnauth.' What remains of this place of Hindoo worship has been for centuries a Mahomedan Mosque, and the whole population of Patan (the more modern name of Somnauth) is Mahomedan ! When the Temple *was* restored, or when it is to be, we have not yet been informed. The ignorance in which this Proclamation must have been written is lamentable, and when



it reached the Council here, it was, I have heard, received with shouts of laughter. It will be well if the gates are only received in the same way, but the intended honour to Hinduism may not be very safely paid in the face of Mahomedanism. It will be a capital joke if the gates and salaams of the folk at Patan come back together; it will be well if it ends in a joke, although it must necessarily be a very expensive one. It is generally correct that 'what every one says must be true': there is not a Journal in India that has not playfully, sarcastically, or argumentatively denounced this 'familiar epistle.' The grounds are various, but the conclusions at which they arrive are the same, that it is the *ne plus ultra* of folly. Some object to the unnecessary affront to the entire Mussulman population of their Empire, and the siding, as it were, with the Hindoos — 'the despoiled tomb of Sultan Mahmoud looks upon the ruins of Ghuznee'!!! — some to the recognition by a Christian Government of the religion of the Heathen; some to the loss of prize money to the troops (for the Ruler of the Punjaub is said to have offered a million of money for the gates, in the belief that the country that possesses them shall never lose territory) and some to the nonsense and bombast attending the whole affair.

In nautical language, Lord Ellenborough ought to be 'broken,' and I think it half done already, for he is certainly 'cracked.'

You will see by the Papers that our retirement from Afgharistan has not been very satisfactorily accomplished, and that the Generals have not escaped scatheless. Pollock is charged with too great hurrying on in obedience to Lord Ellenborough's injunctions to reach Ferozepore by a certain day. McKaskill, with the second Division, suffered serious loss; Nott, too, with the third, had some sharp fighting: the last named officer is charged with a factious spirit, evinced from the time of his arrival at Cabool, when Pollock became first in command. Nott has certainly been dissatisfied with late proceedings, and may have shown his dissatisfaction, but he is an able and gallant man, has gone through the entire campaign (he went to Afghanistan with the first of our troops) and has never once engaged the enemy without giving them a sound thrashing. He sent in his resignation the moment he brought his Force out of the country: it was not accepted, and I have reason to know that he stands very high in the highest quarter.

The China news amounts to little, but is satisfactory as far as it goes. The Emperor's recog-

dition of the treaty agreed to by the Imperial Commissioners is an amusing document. It admits the compulsion under which he submits, yet, in places, assumes all that superiority over us Barbarians which we might have thought had been knocked out of him. The *Englishman* of yesterday mentions that Captain Balfour, of the Madras Artillery, has been appointed Consul General in China, and is to reside at Shanghai. He is a very superior man, and for nearly two years has been sedulously devoting himself to the language of the people and the statistics of the empire. I do not think a better appointment could have been made, and unless I am very much mistaken, this young officer is destined to distinguish himself, and do his honourable masters good service.

Calcutta, which was a short time back as dull as its own Mahratta Ditch water, is brightening up a little.

It is the season of arrivals, and occasionally some hundred pair of feet touch Indian soil for the first time in the course of twenty-four hours ; it is the season when the country comes to town, and it is the season when the town does the hospitable on a larger scale than ordinary. It is the season for Dinners, Balls, the Theatre, the Races, Cricket, Concerts, Church going, and Fan-

cy Fairs. It is also the season in which the *Maw-worms* and *Cantwells* get upon their tubs to choke people off these vanities : I call these gentlemen religious *Punches*, from the devout ardour with which they abuse the Bible by knocking every body over the head with it, just as their more respectable prototype turns his staff to indiscriminate destruction ; but it is my consolation, my dear Alfred, when I note these goings on, to remember that the Devil gets the better of Punch at last.

I don't know why I should not do a little *Morning Post*, and chronicle our gaieties in detail. You would perhaps say it was twaddle, etc. precisely as we do here when we find a column of your London prepared *Overlands* made up of Court gossip about Her Majesty, her husband, and royal young family. We are always delighted to hear the lot are well, but we really do not care to know how many times a week they take the air, or whether they do it on horseback, in a barouche, phaeton, or wheelbarrow. But we *are* delighted with particulars of *mis*-doings in high places. The drunkenness of the Royal Nurse was highly satisfactory, the Jewel robbery by a distinguished Marchioness, the bankruptcy of Lord Huntingtower, the Post-master, the *Fleet*-ings of

Lord Loftus, and the flittings of half a dozen other great people, announced by outlawry, ditto, ditto. These things assure us that living amid the Heathens we are not behind you in morality, and some of them remind us that we are not transported for our wickedness. Once or twice I have seen in the *Overlands* very accurate descriptions of dresses worn at the Queen's or the Countess of Scaramouch's Balls. *That*, my dear Alfred, is perfectly delightful. I don't mean to me, 'because I simply love a petticoat, and there an end on't, but to the ladies, who here rule every thing but their husbands' private accounts, with which they never trouble themselves. Dress, dress, dress is the god of their idolatry—or goddess if you please ; either will do, as we have men and women milliners in abundance. When I enumerated things just now in season, I omitted "Investments"! An investment is literally "a choice investment," and the securing first pick is something like half a hundred sparrows fighting for first peck at an early cherry. Advertisements are watched for with more interest than the upturn of a Lottery ticket, and when out, Heavens! what a crash of carriages at the advertiser's door. Sir, his or her doors are not safe ; transportation for burglary has no terrors, and almost before the sun

is up some desperate hand has forced a way. And what extatic delight Mrs. Poodle enjoys when she appropriates a bonnet or an evening head-dress (not a night-cap) that she knows Mrs. Doodle would think becoming. If there are six under these circumstances she buys them all ;— it is a duty she owes herself to do so. Should Mrs. Doodle by any accident get a bonnet exactly like Mrs. Poodle's, the latter's purchase goes remorselessly to that undiscovered bourne from which no bonnet ever returns. Perhaps you will think this an exaggeration. Come, I will admit the most ; it is a truth very slightly coloured.

I must conclude : I had no intention of writing more than a note, and that I have done. I am sorry I cannot announce the arrival of the *Hindoostan* Steamer. She is now 87 days from Southampton, and ought to have made her appearance before this ; but as the Express does not leave for two days she may yet be heard of at the Sand Heads in time to send the news by this Mail.

I had almost forgotten, my dear Alfred, to request you to call at the *John Bull* Office. That Journal has spoken in a very handsome way of my letters. Will you do me the favour of sec-

ing the Editor, (ask him to dinner if you can)  
and say that I consider him without exception the  
most intelligent man connected with the London  
Press.

Yours faithfully,  
AN IDLER.

---

MY DEAR MACKENZIE,

Calcutta, January 19th, 1843.

When I concluded my letter to Alfred last month, I regretted not being able to announce the arrival of the *Hindoostan*. She was semaphored on the 24th Dec. and in a few hours after was at anchor off Kidderpore Dock. Her run from Madras was very fine, having been only two days and twenty-two hours from the Roads there to the Sand Heads. I went on board the morning after her arrival, and was much disappointed with her. She is a very fine vessel spoiled. Whoever was consulted when her accommodations were planned, must have been entirely ignorant of the taste and habits of the Anglo-Indian community. This is vexatious, but the best way is to speak the truth boldly, that the people at home may avoid a repetition of the mistake that has been made, when building other vessels. There is not what in this part of the world we should call a good cabin in the ship, the saloon alone excepted,



which is however decorated with very bad taste, and looks more like a show-room hung round with painted tea boards in a Birmingham Hardwareman's than any thing else. If there is one thing more agreeable to the eye than another on board ship it is plain clean paint, particularly in a warm climate. Can anything be more horrible, in its way, than to have a spread peacock's tail staring you for ever out of countenance with its hundred eyes, or a gorgeous sun-set that dazzles with vermillion, cobalt and rich sienna. I was on board the *Prince of Wales* a few days after, a magnificent vessel, and the extreme simplicity of the panelling of her cabins was a delightful contrast. But the Saloon of the *Hindoostan* might be endured; her other accommodations must be unendurable. I need not describe it, for you will have seen accounts before she left England. She is a bee-hive of cells, little berths for little babies, rather than sleeping places for full grown men; her ventilation below appears to depend on a skylight and a windsail, and verily these are precarious: the corridor round the ship is the grand mistake; it shuts out every cabin from ports, and has nothing to recommend it, for it is too narrow for a promenade even if a noble deck above were not sufficient for that purpose. It is true that all the cells are

venetianed, but if they are to be private the blinds must be turned down, opening as they do into this said corridor. I do not say it might not have been advisable to have some berths laid out as all of them are, because to pay she must carry many passengers, and there are always a number who do not care particularly about their accommodation provided it is only ordinarily respectable ; but she should have had some superior cabins, for those who might choose to pay a superior price. The utmost the longest purse can now achieve is to take four or six berths to himself to put his baggage into, and still have no room to move in. You know India. Fancy half a dozen gentlemen having a place about seven or eight feet long by four or five broad to dress in, with one wash-hand-stand between them ! I am sorry to repeat that the vessel is in these respects one great mistake, and I am positive that *from* India, she will never take first class passengers until very considerable alterations are made. You are perhaps aware she left the Cape with upwards of 100 on board. I think she took away the other day (the 14th) 43 ! and the sailing vessels all filling well ; nay, even Overland passengers waiting for the *India*, which sails on the 10th proximo, and whose accommodations are very far superior. I repeat, I say, all

this with very great regret, for the Company has deserved well, and in building a noble craft they have earned the gratitude of the public. They have been ill-advised however, and the best thing is to let them know it. Some clamour has been raised as to the charges of the Company, but very groundlessly ; their terms are reasonable, certainly they would never keep a berth vacant. Whether the Directors may hereafter be able to make any deduction, is not the question ; it would have been very unwise to have adopted a lower scale at the outset of the undertaking. I consider that the passage money is quite as moderate as in the first class sailing vessels, even without much allowance for the time saved, which is money. I have spoken to many passengers who came out in her, and they speak in the highest terms of her power, and her character as a sea-boat ; her average while under weigh was about  $8\frac{1}{2}$  knots throughout the voyage. She was actually at sea 62 days and 16 hours.

This is a great deal to have said about a Steamer, but remember we have been looking for her a long time, and, disappointed as almost all have been touching the matters of which I have complained, there are none (excepting perhaps some

canvass Captains) who have not welcomed her arrival, and cried *Gaudeamus* !

I also suggested in my last that if the doings at Ferozepore had come off I might have had some fun to relate. They have come off, and there is nothing to say, except that as a *spectacle* it was one great failure. If you have ever seen the goodly company on the boards of a Booth Theatre at Bartlemy fair, between soaking showers, with their traps draggled and their visages woe-begone, you must have a very good idea of the scene as it has been represented. The rain was falling in torrents, yet between whiles there were reviews and sham battles. The Nautical threatened to rival the Military, and towards the close of the affair all were literally enswamped. The ladies were disgusted with the men, and said they were bears—perhaps they were a little hairy after their difficult campaign—the men were horrified at the dowdiness of the women, who were tricked out after the obsolete fashion of four years ago, ere they and their true loves were parted, and when the Camp broke up, which it did on the 5th of this month, there was more delight than ever there was at a public school on a like occasion. Lord Ellenborough, or long Ned, as he is called—I believe the soubriquet came from Europe, and has reference

to his legs, certainly not his head—was in high feather during the grand scene, and the welcoming home the heroes of a hundred fights, or whatever may have been the exact number, if you are very particular. He superintended the whole arrangements even to painting the Elephants' heads, and his Triumphal Arch, a good idea happily carried out, was achieved by some bamboos and a few yards of cloth forming a curve at the end of the Bridge of Boats. Lady Sale and her daughter headed the column on two tame Elephants belonging specially to the Governor General; but where was Lady Elphinstone? She declined appearing, and with good taste started direct for Loodianah.

Separate dinners were given to Generals Pollock, Nott, and Sale, and most complimentary speeches made by his Lordship, which put everybody in good humour, for these occasions only. Sale, however, hit him smartly over the knuckles, and Captain Macgregor, C. B. a little harder. Lord E. drank to the Illustrious Garrison, and then to almost every officer belonging to it, individually, aye, down to some of the youngest subalterns; but he omitted to notice Macgregor, because I suppose he was *only* Political Assistant! The old General made amends. He took the liberty of telling his Lordship, that it was to Macgregor's

talents and exertions, he was mainly indebted for those means which insured ultimate success, and he would drink his health. This toast was of course received with the utmost enthusiasm. Capt. Macgregor returned thanks to 'the General and his Brother officers,' and his Lordship had his rebuke.

The General Nott the Governor General paid the most marked attention. He considers him the very man for the crisis in which he was placed, and I hear has sounded his praises in very high quarters.

The great man has taken his departure for Delhi, and it is said is looking out for the hottest place in India for a summer residence, that he may make it thoroughly agreeable to his Staff. To justify something of a military train, my Lord is talking of deposing the old king of Delhi, and you may rely upon it as long as he remains in this country he will be thumping away at some big drum. He would die if he were not making a row; as it is, he is as merry as a cricket, and sneers at the luxury of ice and punkahs for any *man* at any season.

The Gates of Somnath, of which you will have heard not a little by last mail, are still green as a subject of discussion in our Indian Journals.

They stand fresh in almost every column, for comment or correspondence, and to crown the absurdity of the whole affair, some twenty Missionaries have addressed a protest to his Lordship! I should very much like to be by when he receives it. These meddling ministers have produced a very absurd paper, in which they express, seriously, a belief that sending the old rubbish to Somnath is an 'unwonted and gratuitous insult upon Divine Majesty'! One does not like to speak harshly of gentlemen in black, but they provoke it sadly by interfering as a body in matters they have nothing to do with, and attempting to aggravate a piece of stupid folly into a crime against the Almighty! The subject has been discussed from one end of India to the other, lengthways and breadthways; from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, as comprehensive orators invariably say, and from the Bay of Bengal to the prongs of Bombay Harbour; and it is pronounced by all—I mean the mission and transmission of the gates—as the greatest piece of practical *rot* of which any pompous, official noodle was ever guilty. But do not be alarmed for the safety of India. Neither Hindoo will rejoice, nor Mussulman frown, at the large Ellenborough plaything, or whatever he may say of, or do with it. Perhaps you will

\

like to know whether the gates are really to be forwarded to Somnath? All I can say is, they are now at Ferozepore, and that a carriage is being constructed that is to convey them; so that if they are not accidentally lost by some unexpected accident on the way, they will reach their destination. And at Somnath? You mean what will become of them? They will possibly be treated with the contempt the whole affair merits, or, as Somnath, though of Mussulman population, is still a place of Hindoo pilgrimage, these precious relics may be set up and made the source of a very pretty tax. But these Missionaries coming out with their protest, a long day after the fair, would be something to laugh at, were we not compelled to regret that such exceedingly valuable people should waste their exceedingly valuable time. They hear the whole voice of India proclaim the restitution of the gates the very balderdash of action, and they come in with their penny trumpet, —these twenty Missionaries,—and too-too that it is an unholy act of sinful insult to our God and Saviour! which is just carrying the joke a little too far. I do not perceive that any of our ‘regulars’ subscribe to the protest.—Why not?

Rumours are rife of an intention to transfer the seat of Government from Calcutta to some place



in the Upper Provinces, Agra, or Delhi, and now Meerut is spoken of. I apprehend there is not much in this. Had we always Governors General like Ellenborough, wherever he was would be the seat, etc. for he does not trouble his head about his Council, as I have before told you. I can understand that in the event of any war, such as we have been engaged in, some benefit might accrue from the Government being as near the scene of action as possible, and so it always might be, for the time being, without making any such radical change as is supposed to be in contemplation. Calcutta has its advantages for headquarters, and they are not less now that it is the point of communication between Europe and India, for I have little doubt that when our powerful steamers are in regular operation we shall receive dispatches earlier than they could possibly reach us from Bombay, until indeed we have a rail-road from that Presidency.

Until two days ago we had received no news from China since the despatch of the December Mail.

Our arrivals now are to the 6th December, and they bring very melancholy intelligence, not only in the circumstances related, but in the possible consequence to which they may lead—the renewal

of hostilities between England and the Celestial empire. In September 1841 the *Nerbudda*, Transport, was lost on the coast of the Island of Formosa, and in the following March, a small vessel called the *Ann*. On board these two vessels there were 331 souls, of whom 283 have either been put to death by the officers of the Chinese Government on the Island, or have perished from ill-treatment or starvation ! It is most extraordinary that no continued efforts were made to gain some positive knowledge about the fate of these unhappy creatures, for where the vessels were wrecked was very well known.

You will see the proclamations issued by Sir Henry Pottinger on this occasion. The one intended for the Emperor is by no means as determined as it should have been. He demands that the guilty authorities of Formosa should be brought to condign punishment, and that their property should be confiscated for the benefit of the families of those who suffered ; but he adds, he does not know what may be the consequence if these terms are not complied with, whether it may not induce Her Britannic Majesty to renew hostilities ! Knowing the people with whom he has to deal, he should have threatened an immediate visitation from the fleet, and that the capital of the Island

should be laid waste. These enormities were perpetrated before the treaty was concluded, but what then? Are they not to be taught that humanity is not to be unnecessarily violated even while men are at war with each other. The Emperor was imposed upon by a statement that these vessels had visited the Island with hostile intentions, that their people were conquered and taken prisoners, and the order for the execution of the survivors came from Peking; the greater the reason that the Emperor should hand over to death the miscreants concerned in the butchery. You will see that Sir Henry in his proclamation to British subjects says—"The Plenipotentiary imagines that it must be already generally known, that, when the *Nerbudda* got into danger, the natives of India on board of that ship were abandoned by the master and mates of her, and also by an officer and a small detachment of Her Majesty's regiments who were proceeding in her to join the expedition."

This party was subsequently picked up, and it will be strange indeed, now that the magnitude of the disaster is known, if this officer of H. M. Service is not brought to a Court Martial. Who shall say that if he and his detachment had staid by the vessel they might not have saved every life that has been sacrificed. Many were assaulted

and murdered while landing, and surely this would never have been the case had there been an armed force with them. Unhappily the whole body of victims were natives of this country, and wholly defenceless. This bad news from China created no little sensation among the opium speculators of the last sale, when the drug was run up to a very large figure per chest. The buyers were chiefly Jews, but luckily for Government, their purchases had all been completed before the intelligence arrived, or there might have been a few defaulters. The fall has been about 200 Rupees a chest: a report was prevalent two days ago that the *Water Witch* clipper (laden with opium) had been destroyed by fire at Singapore, but this was a "Stock-Exchange" lie, to create, as far as it might, something of a demand.

So much for foreign matter: our purely local news is nothing worth. Church, State, and Law are as per last advice. The Bishop is still absent on his triennial tour; the State is in a state of nonentity, except for small legislation; and the Law, if by that you will understand the Bar, is becoming more powerful by each new arrival. Some wag here is reported to have advised some limb at home, that two or three of our leaders were on the eve of returning to their father

or mother lands, and that there would be an immense opening. Whether the opening will have let them in, remains to be seen, I hope not ; but you may take my word for it, the best parts of our Supreme Court furniture are fixtures. Nevertheless let none be discouraged ; the more the merrier, and as I see no Tory commissions at work a foot there must be a lot of idle hands at home. They should come here by all means ; if they find nothing to do, they will enjoy the trip amazingly, and coming overland, as it is called, may be out and home in the course of the long vacation. Talking of Law, our Law Commission is happily in a fair way of going out, never, I hope, to be relighted. The Hon'ble Mr. Amos and Mr. Cameron are about to take their departure, and the Secretary had obtained leave, which has been cancelled at his own request, the only unfavourable symptom, as it may indicate the probability of these vacancies being filled up. Is there no man in the House with time to ask the Minister what has been done for the country in return for the three or four hundred thousand pounds that it has cost since the job was first set afoot ?

Mr. George Thompson has arrived amongst us ; perhaps he will make enquiries upon the spot. By the bye, it must have gladdened his

heart to read a Draft Act just out, for amending the law regarding the condition of slavery within the territories of the East India Company, and which being very brief, I may here set down in detail:—

I. "It is hereby enacted and declared, that no public Officer shall in execution of any decree or order of Court, or for the enforcement of any demand of Rent or Revenue sell or cause to be sold any person or the right to the compulsory labor or services of any person on the ground that such person is in a state of slavery.

II. "And it is hereby declared and enacted, that no rights arising out of an alleged property in the person and services of another as a slave shall be enforced by any Civil or Criminal Court or Magistrate within the Territories of the East India Company.

III. "And it is hereby declared and enacted, that no person who may have acquired property by his own industry or by the exercise of any art, calling or profession, or by inheritance, assignment, gift or bequest shall be dispossessed of such property or prevented from taking possession thereof on the ground that such person or that the person from whom the property may have been derived was a slave.

IV. "And it is hereby enacted, that any Act which would be a penal offence if done to a free man, shall be equally an offence if done to any person on the pretext of his being in a condition of slavery."

This Act is not passed, but is to be reconsidered at the first meeting of the legislative council after the 6th of April next.

I have now touched upon the principal topics of news, and if there is no great deal in them, there is at any rate quite enough to be a sufficient return for what we get. The boy Jones, like Monsieur Tonson, came again by the last arrivals, and our boy Jones (Ellenborough) is again before you. Your female Chartists were a bit of novelty I confess, but Miss Mary Ann Walker evidently belongs to the family of the Hookey's, and we are far too well bred to sympathize with such vulgarities and coarseness. As for your Aërial carriage, we say, fudge! although the *Atlas* is as serious about it as if the Editor had been condemned to an experimental voyage. The importation of beef, to which your papers prominently refer, must always be a matter of some interest to John Bull, wherever located, but we hardly feel that it imposes on us the necessity of sending you a better supply of food than our worst monthlies afford. Indeed, we consider we are giving you very great credit (without security) on the score of news, for we supply wars and rumours of wars, and we get nothing in return but the petty hostilities of faction. Unless you are able to remit something of

a little more value, than Court gossip, Parish intrigues for power, Old Bailey records, and Smithfield statistics, we shall really have to change our Agents in Europe, and look to Paris or Vienna for our correspondents. Trusting that your Editors will look to this, and consider what they are about,

I remain,

My dear Mackenzie,

Yours faithfully,

AN IDLER.



MY DEAR MACKENZIE,

*Calcutta, February 16, 1843.*

The principal news of the month is Chinese, and in another part of this paper you will find it given at length : though the fact of an outbreak may have reached home by the last Mail you cannot have had the details. The riot at Canton was most serious : opinion differs very widely as to its origin, whether in a preconcerted design to outrage English residents and their property, or in a casual conflict between a number of liberty men, (lascars) from the ships and some of the natives. The merchants at Canton appear satisfied of the former, and that the authorities are unequal to their protection. Sir Henry Pottinger distinctly declares that no single fact has come to his knowledge to induce him to concur with them, and he as distinctly refused to send the force that was applied for. I think he was right; and when you read his reasons, with which I need not here trouble you, I have little doubt you will think so

too. You will see that he lectures the applicants very severely, and Sir Hugh Gough also expresses a hope that our merchants will profit by their experience. Both these Officers are clear that the crews of the *Fort William* and other ships were the *originators* of the disturbance. There certainly is nothing to lead any one to the conclusion that this was an explosion of national hostility. Had it been so, matters went so far that they must have gone further, and life would have been sacrificed as well as property. I apprehend a Chinese mob is very much like all other mobs in large cities, ripe for riot at any time, and happy to get up a row for the sake of plunder.

We have as yet heard nothing of the result of the Plenipotentiary's appeal to the Emperor on the subject of the Formosa massacre; but the great probability is, that his demands will be complied with, and that the principal villains will be given up. It is not likely that a gentleman who consigns his best friends to the bow-string or the axe, with as little compunction as if good ministers and able generals grew like flowers, will make any difficulty about the punishment of inferior authorities; nor even had they acted on express mandate would it be any safe protection from the despot who rules the destinies of the Celestial empire.

We know nothing definite about the Opium question. It is said that Sir Henry has endeavoured to persuade the high commissioners to consent to the trade being legalised, but there are no reasonable grounds for supposing he will be successful. It is a matter which they must refer to head quarters, and the Emperor is so wedged in, if I may so say, by his many edicts, that he will find it difficult to get out of his moral resolution never to countenance the drug, even if he should think it 'expedient' to give way. Whether the body of the people would applaud and support him in daring all the consequences of a second war for virtue's sake, is another matter. It is very well known that Opium is a source of immense profit to very many officers high in rank, who buy in large quantities, and retail it throughout the empire, and while they apparently are with the Government, it is pretty certain they would prefer war with opium to peace without. Disaffection to the present dynasty is believed to be rife in China, more particularly in the central provinces, and a very slight affair may blow the smouldering heat into a flame. I will here quote a passage from one of our morning papers, the *Calcutta Star*, upon this subject. The writer is replying to the assertion that there is throughout the country

a feeling of almost irrepressible hostility to the English, of which the disturbances at Canton are taken as an illustration:—

‘ We have conversed with several Officers <sup>who</sup> have returned from the Expedition, and their experience negatives this altogether : they tell us on the contrary, of many demonstrations of kindly feeling, and believe that the body of the people are not insensible to the good effects our visit was calculated to produce upon a Government which has ruled with a rod of iron, on an assumption of superiority to all worldly power, and which the governed have hitherto too credulously believed. We have little doubt that the people are in advance of their Government, and that we have struck a blow at the despotism of the latter from which it will never recover. While the people thought themselves invincible, they doubly respected, or dreaded, the Government that told them they were so, and showed a bearing to all other nations that unquestioned superiority could alone have saved from being monstrously absurd. Whatever may continue to be the language of the great lunatic who presides over the celestial destinies, it can no longer impose on the positive experience of the people. What our armies and fleets have done, is a page in their history which

nothing can blot out. The Government may read it as it will, but it is impossible its lesson should be lost upon the country.

‘The disaffection that exists in this vast empire to the family at present on the throne is beyond controversy. We have had accumulating proofs of it since we first came into such close contact with them, and we believe that there are those now in Calcutta who can speak to the contents of certain intercepted letters which, replying to the most peremptory orders for troops to be sent in particular directions, declared they could not be spared in the then state of the population. We would not too readily conclude that the show of hostility to us in Canton itself, and the hundreds of petitions which are said to have poured in upon the Imperial Cabinet against the treaty, and its concessions to the outside Barbarians, are altogether unconnected with hatred of the Supreme Government, and a desire to see it further embroiled.’

I believe there is truth in the above, and agree with the writer in his concluding words—‘We have been told of peace in India and peace in China. Our opinion is strongly against our relations with the celestials being settled: we may perhaps find ere long that our war is only begun.’

H. M. 26th and 49th Regiments with the Bengal Volunteers have arrived in Calcutta. The Europeans are to proceed home forthwith; the necessary tender for vessels will be a great lift to the shipping community. I fancy that the two first named regiments will, with invalids, amount to nearly 3000 men. When the 26th left this in 1840, they were upwards of 900 strong; of these not more than 200 have returned! but the regiment has been fully recruited. It is said that the 49th has suffered nearly to the same extent. I have not made a calculation of our loss in action and from wounds, since we first landed at Chusan, but I fancy it has not amounted to 100 men during the whole war, sickness has done the rest. It rests with the Government how much of this was caused by a miserable Commissariat. You will remember to have heard the loud complaints of the wretched food that was served out to our men, and the insufficiency of suitable clothing for them. There was a committee of enquiry sitting here for some time upon the subject, but where is their report? All I can say is, the public has never heard anything about it. If the suddenness of the despatch of troops, and the unfavourable season at which a large supply of provisions had to be collected formed any excuse, the Commissariat

should have had the benefit of it, for it is beyond dispute, that stinking provisions were served out which the men would not, indeed could not, eat. It was before these things were remedied that the fearful mortality occurred, that our men died by the score, and were buried in trenches.

• Sir Hugh Gough stands at the head of our arrivals. He came round some days ago in the *Endymion*, and remains here until the 22nd instant, when he proceeds in the same frigate to Madras, where he will remain until Sir Jasper Nicholls retires, to whose high office of Commander-in-Chief, it is understood he is to succeed in October next. I think I mentioned in one of my letters that suggestions were thrown out for some public entertainments in honour of our Afghan Victories. They fell to the ground stillborn. The Calcutta people have no idea of *fêting* an occasion, but give them a great man to compliment, something of flesh and blood that they can bow to, and you touch them nearly. It is a thing they like, and at which they are very great. An entertainment to Sir Hugh Gough and the China heroes was no sooner suggested than put in train; he was amongst us, to be called on, and talked to, and stared at, and public feeling sprung instantaneously to the necessary height of enthusiasm. A

Ball and Supper are to come off at the Town Hall to-night, and every thing promises the eclat which should attend *les braves*.

Before very long you will have an opportunity of seeing a drawing, which is to be engraved from, of the signing of the draft treaty with the Chinese. The scene is on board the *Cornwallis*, and the picture introduces no fewer than fifty-six portraits, the likenesses, as far as I am able to judge, being most admirable. The artist is Captain Platt of the Bengal Volunteers. The engraving will be brought out by subscription, and upwards of 300 names were put down among the Force in China and the European residents there. It will be, I expect, a taking affair, and ought to have the patronage of Victoria.

Afghanistan is nearly a dead letter. We have heard nothing of Dost Mahomed, except that he and his family have been well received at Lahore since he was turned adrift, and of Akhbar Khan only rumours. It is said he is in force, and meditating a descent upon Peshawur. We have had some discussion here as to the course our Government should pursue in the event of his commencing hostilities with the Siekhs, but policy and good faith (good faith is the best policy) require we should assist them if necessary, and I believe it will be necessary if the Afghan is in



earnest. The Afghans have learned no little from us in the last four years, and their power to cope with the Punjaubees even in the days of Runjeet, the Lion of the North, was by no means despicable. A good deal has been said about this country requiring peace, and that all her available resources should be devoted to internal improvement: very well as far as it goes, but not to be considered when the question is whether we are to see faithful allies on our frontier attacked, and our own provinces approached.

The Courts Martial on the hostages you will see are all over, and they have ended honourably to them. About Colonel Shelton's there was some doubt, but he has passed the ordeal, having been found guilty on one charge only out of four. From the way in which the whole of the charges were framed it was impossible that any thing should have been elicited to throw much light on the causes of disasters, much more frightful than they ought to have been, but they are pretty well understood, and I believe there is not a dissentient opinion among those who were on the spot and survived, that the outbreak might have been crushed at any hour during the first twenty-four, perhaps I might say forty-eight, had bold measures been adopted. Applications were made by Burnes

for assistance, which were all unattended to, and he was murdered even while relying on the aid which never was to reach him. You have heard at home a good deal about this bloody page in our history, but I believe you will yet hear more ; and if all that is in existence see the light the real history of the Ellenborough administration of affairs too, which has been told, will be thoroughly confirmed.

It never can be too positively affirmed that his Lordship set his face against all advance, and this even when satisfied our troops could not retreat ; passive resistance till they could withdraw was all he would hear of,—until—what ? the indignant voice of this country, and as we believe hints from home (Peel's speech left little doubt what Ministers had done) coerced him into that ignoble compromise between inherent obstinacy and his subjection to a higher power than his own. Without the moral courage to say, 'I was wrong, and have been put right,' he said 'you may go on if you please,' knowing full well that the word would then instantly be, Advance ! Never man got more happily out of a fearful scrape. Had he been obeyed, as by weak men he would have been, the name of Ellenborough would have been something to curse, while now and hereafter it may be

mentioned merely with simple scorn. There has been some little snivelling here in one or two of the papers about his being 'abused.' He has on the whole been mildly treated, and if there be any soreness that his incapacity to rule this empire has been shown up in plainer terms than such incapacity is generally rebuked with, he has only to thank himself. He began his career here with a marked contempt for men who could have restrained many of his vagaries, and given him good counsel: he attempted, like little Jack Horner, to exalt himself, 'what a great man am I,' by the unprecedented course of attacking those who had had gone before him, and thus, however unintentionally, lowering in the native mind respect for the Government over which he was called to preside. The *Morning Chronicle* styles him 'a shallow, heartless coxcomb.' We never indulge in such personalities here, and the extreme mildness of the plainest spoken of the Indian Press cannot but have moderated his Lordship's rancour against it. Hear what the *Calcutta Star* says on the question of the influence the Press may have had upon his mind:—

'But the Press has done much in directing attention to desirable measures, and not a little in coercing public men into the right way. Let

us take Lord Ellenborough and his Afghan policy.'

Here we had set over us a man whose misfortune it was to be greater in position than in talents, circumstances having done much for him and nature little. Born and bred in the School of Toryism, that was first threatened before he was breeched, and fearfully shaken almost before he was a man, he lacked the intelligence to move with the times, and grew strong in the prejudices of a political system he was destined to survive. A sinecurist in every appointment he ever held, and less dangerous in those for which he attempted nothing than in those for which he did his best, the return to power of a Party that had sacrificed its odious name to lull the suspicions of an alarmed country made him, in the poverty of their ranks, Governor General of India.

Hither he came in the plenitude of a power an able man could alone exercise beneficially, a power dangerous to a degree where there was not even prudence in the possessor : hither he came at a moment when the stability of England was believed by myriads to be shaken, when her enemies were triumphant, and the strongholds of the savage were the prisons of her people : hither he came to find how much had been done to retrieve her

disasters, to learn that in the East and in the West were gallant hearts and true, leagues made holy by the patriotism that inspired them.

And what did he? But stay, let us anticipate the question; what had Toryism to do with his measures? The inculcations of Toryism made a naturally weak and vain man arbitrary and self-willed, and led him to spurn the counsel he most needed. The *sic vola sic jubeo* of abler spirits in olden days was remembered, and he was fain to fancy himself the 'Heaven-born Minister' who ruled an empire with a nod. Toryism is impatient of control, badly bold, self-relying, contemptuous—all this was Lord Ellenborough. He was succeeding a Whig; if he could undo all that had been done, whatever the sacrifice, the Tory triumphed. He paused not to inquire—Has wisdom done its best to repair the disasters that little less than madness could have induced? to lift the prostrate glory of England from the dust, and avenge upon the barbarian the devilish treachery which struck it down?—a signal retribution was in course—that was enough; the veto went forth, and the disgraceful mandate, 'Let them return!'

When the historian reviews the unwise policy that led us into Afghanistan, his readers will wonder at the infatuation of men of all parties

terrified at a phantom themselves had raised ; when he narrates the horrors that overtook our people there, they will shudder ; when he records the policy that would have left those horrors unatoned, the murdered dead unavenged, the suffering captives unredeemed, they will turn sickening from the page, and thank God there was some power great enough to avert the threatened shame !

If impudence could assert that the order to retire was never given, credulity itself would not believe it. Credulity has done its utmost in thinking that the order may have been a ruse ! We will say nothing of the intellect that could have suggested such an expedient, it is enough that we think it unworthy even Lord Ellenborough's. His orders were positive in themselves, and peremptory in their tone,—Retire ! it was politically disgraceful, but the man was in earnest. Much has yet to be given to the world, and we may hereafter learn the true secret of the dismissal of more than one of our Politicals.

In this extremity it was well for England that she had Generals with heads, and with a moral courage equal to the discomfiture of a man who had none. We need not recapitulate what has been so often written—Pollock would not retire time passed away and he had,—no order, mark

no order—but a discretion, to go on ! He did go on, Nott went on, our Arms were triumphant and the prisoners were delivered ! What produced this relaxation of an inveterate hostility to a course the honour of the country demanded ? Any self-originating doubt ? No. We believe the undivided voice of India alarmed My Lord, and checked him in the madness of his career, and that his very mates, the Ministers at home, were found to make common cause against the fatal measure of a dishonorable retreat. Nor he, nor Ministers united could have faced the indignation of England and India, made by cowardly submission the scorn of the world ; but we exonerate them. We do not hesitate to say, that we believe in this instance the Press exercised a direct and powerful influence upon the Governor General. The country from North to South, from East to West, while he was reiterating his orders to withdraw, was unanimous in its opinion of the wretched consequences that would ensue,

‘ And with a loud and yet a louder voice’

shouted, Advance ! They spoke through the Press, and it is monstrous to suppose their indignant remonstrances were without effect.

If we were alarmed at the lack of sagacity that perilled our fame, and shocked at the apparent

want of humanity that gave no thought to our prisoners, with what feeling has the public beheld the later doings of the Autocrat of the East? We think with sorrow, not unrelieved, however, by contempt. • His has been the onus of lavish expenditure with a poverty-stricken exchequer; his the glory of bombastic Orders and fustian Addresses; his the varied occupation of painting elephants and daubing heroes, to-day the unworthy panegyrist of brave men, to-morrow the worthy LORD OF LOLIPOPS!

The Press has helped to save the Country : who shall say there is not virtue in the PRESS."

This is a long extract for a letter, but you will the better judge whether the man is abused, or under the circumstances tenderly handled. When I wrote last he was going to pass the hot weather at Meerut ; he has changed his mind and proceeds to the Hills, Mussoorie is now his destination. It was said some time back that he defied the climate, and selected Meerut as about the most trying location for the next few months, for the sake of making it pleasant to his Staff. I should not be surprised if he find before long the coolest place in India too hot to hold him. The Somnath Gates are now it seems to stay at Bindrabun for the present instead of at Delhi, and the probability



of the foolery of their restoration ever being consummated is, I think, rather remote.

I mentioned in my last the departure of the *Hindustan* Steamer: the *India*, quite full of passengers left on the 10th instant, and the *Tenasserim*, a Government Steamer (also full) starts on the 5th proximo. Among our departures I may mention (by the *Earl of Hardwicke*) that 'of the Hon. Mr. Amos, the fourth ordinary Member of Council. He has been succeeded by Mr. Cameron, one of the Law Commissioners, who has taken his seat in Council under the usual salute. The appointment is of course only until the pleasure of the Hon'ble Court of Directors shall be made known. This fourth Member is not entitled to sit in Council except when Laws and Regulations are being considered. Mr. Amos had been in the habit of sitting generally, and it was one of Lord Ellenborough's first acts to inform him his presence might be spared. Mr. Amos did not belong to the Law Commission, thinking the two appointments inconsistent; Mr. Cameron would appear to entertain a different opinion. I trust that in the ensuing Session of Parliament (now I suppose about opening) some Member will bring the India Law Commission before the House. It is idle to write anything more about it here. Its existence

is to all intents and purposes a farce, except in its cost, that indeed is the joke. It is not a case of paying too dearly for our whistle, we get no whistle at all. I say it is idle to write anything more about it here, for I do not believe there are two opinions in India about it. It has been exposed over and over again as a worthless affair, as regards the purposes for which it was specially created, and I do not remember a single instance in which a syllable has been spoken or written in its defence.

I mentioned the steamers just now. I should have reported a meeting that has been held to consider the long services of Mr. Greenlaw in the cause. The first called was unattended, except by some three or four gentlemen; on the second occasion the company was numerous, but whether in compliment to Mr. G. (who well deserves it, though he has been in many points obstinately wrong) or to hear the great Mr. George Thompson, I will not venture to guess. It was Mr. T.'s 'first appearance on this stage, and he apparently acquitted himself to the satisfaction of the audience. His style is flowery, but he lacks argument; there are no tangible facts in his addresses, (I refer to them generally,) and I should say little more of those I have heard

and read than that they are of the best description of clap-trap. The *Overland Englishman* of this date pays the Steam speech an equivocal compliment by saying, it was 'by no means the worst of Mr. Thompson's orations.' Mr. T. has given a great impetus to *La Jeune Bengal*, by putting himself in communication with the native community, and I am sure he thinks he is doing good. When he understands the people to whom he is addressing himself a little better, he will be sensible of the time he has thrown away. It would have been much wiser had he devoted himself to a study of the country, its history, wants, resources and government: perhaps he may be doing all this, but he is unquestionably consuming much of his time in unprofitably talking to a people who are not morally conditioned to enter upon grievances, since they show no inclination to ameliorate those which originate in themselves. Mr. Thompson meets large parties once or twice a week, and tells them what they have been told any time the last twenty years, and to which they have paid the slightest possible attention. He does not attempt in Calcutta to colour his addresses with indiscriminate censure of the Government, or extravagant stories of the frightful abuses of power which have heretofore reached us from England. He is tem-

perate enough in this respect, but his over estimate of his audiences, I mean of their real desire to do anything for themselves, encourages him to dwell on what they might do, and which passes away—just so many words—as unprofitably as the smoke from their hookahs or hubble-bubbles. It may be said that in this condition they the more require thus to be impressed. Not so,—just at present, nor will it be so, I am afraid, for half a century to come. If you scatter seed on unploughed ground, grains may take root here and there and produce fruit; if you would have a harvest you must adopt an approved system of husbandry. The moral husbandry of a people is to teach them to know something of themselves before you call them in to council upon others. The spread of education has already done something for this country, but it has hardly begun to shake the strong-holds of ignorance and superstition; it is next to nothing that it has done towards inoculating the people with a reverence for the cardinal virtues. I am not here going to dilate upon the great national vices of India, you have spent a long time among its people, and know them well. When we have evidence that the first fruit of education—self-respect—is sprung up in the land it will be quite early enough to direct

the public mind to public affairs. Until then all lectures that are not purely educational are profitless words. Of this I am quite satisfied, that the best educated natives in this country are of the same way of thinking, and certainly it is not among them the belief prevails that *La Jeune Bengal* is in a condition to improve the Government.

You may remember that when Baboo Dwarkanath Tagore dined at the Mansion House he made a very excellent speech upon the connection of his country with Great Britain, and there was no want of acknowledgment of the blessings we had conferred upon India. At a meeting of young and middle-aged gentlemen at the Hindoo College the other day, an essay was read on the Criminal Judicature and Police under the Bengal Presidency, and in the course of it the greatest abuse of the Government and Europeans generally was indulged in.

The Principal of the College; Captain Richardson, was present by special invitation, and he paid the party, who cheered more loudly as the invective was more senseless, the compliment of interfering and remonstrating against such an abuse of a Hall provided for Educational purposes—part of a noble Institution—by the munificence of the

Government. There was a great row, and these men and boys carried matters with a high hand. Of course they are only laughed at, for as the *Friend of India* well says:—

‘ Perhaps there is nothing so entirely harmless as these declamations of the young Baboos of the Hindoo College. A Government that has stood the fire of the Mahomedan press, in a period of great excitement, when its denunciations were supported by a reference to the army before Herat, which was said to be destined for the reconquest of India, can have nothing to dread from a few disaffected harangues in the College Hall of Calcutta, from men who have not the slightest influence in the country. Whatever information these essays contain which may tend to enlighten the minds of the public authorities, as to the cause or the remedy of public grievances, will be received with thankfulness. The seditious froth, Government is strong enough in the benevolence of its motives, and in its physical energies, to despise. The best mode of treating such orations, is to take no notice of them, whether delivered at the College Hall, or the Town Hall, or any Hall in Calcutta.’

The fitness of such a theme as a vehicle for abuse, or even complaint is remarkable, the whole

of the corruption being, as is notorious, the want of integrity in the native character! The proceedings of Mr. Thompson I think are calculated to encourage these demagogues in their noisy, senseless declamation; it may however be useful by giving him some insight into the 'intelligence' which he is reported to prize most highly. The Government has much to do for India, and she has firm friends among her European population, insignificantly small as it is, who will systematically urge such measures as are practicable, and promise improvement in the condition of the people: they lack not the incitement of Native agitation, even were it rational and suggestive.

I believe I have touched on the principal matters of interest that have presented themselves since I wrote last, and now, with kind remembrances to all your circle, remain as ever,

My dear Mackenzie,

Yours faithfully,

AN IDLER.

---

MY DEAR ALFRED,

*Calcutta, March 18th, 1843.*

Peace in Asia! and Nature's limits to our Empire in the East, the Indus, were at once the boast and pledge of the gentleman who sits on the highest stool, and was to rule British India with a goose quill. War has come upon us, and with-*out* the Indus too. Ellenborough is no prophet in the land; we have never had peace to be relied on for an hour since his Lordship came into the country, and it is great good fortune that with war has come victory. Napier's defeat of the Ameers is one of the finest things that has ever been accomplished by any troops in any part of the world, and one almost imagines the days of chivalry are come again when we hear of the gallant bearing of one man turning the current of battle at desperate odds. It would be unjust to the Government to speak positively of the immediate causes which led to the sanguinary battle which has lately been fought within sight of the Towers of Hyder-



abad, for at present we are not thoroughly well informed, but it is believed that every clause of the treaty was agreed to, even to the one so firmly resisted, the secession of a small portion of their hunting grounds for the facilitation of our navigation of the river, and that then a heavy fine was inflicted as a punishment for their having entered into correspondence with some power hostile to us. It is hardly possible to imagine that this was the case, for it would have been as cruel as arbitrary, and as arbitrary as impolitic. It has been well said, that in these cases the Company is accuser, jury and judge, that to bring the accusation is to inflict the punishment, and that the most innocent are utterly defenceless.

The immediate cause of the battle in which Napier and the gallant troops under him have gained immortal renown, was the attack made on Major Outram at the Residency ; it is what led to this that is at present in obscurity. That the Chiefs were not all hostile may be inferred from the fact that he was warned of his danger and entreated to withdraw, and that he would have been murdered on his return from Durbar but for the protection afforded him. The admirable defence made, and the admirable retreat to the river I shall not dwell upon, you can refer to the despatches ; it was brilliant as a dis-

play of the Military Art, and makes one proud of the British soldier. Napier had been playing a little bit of the fool with his pen, and promulgating some eccentric orders which made people smile, but his glorious conduct when it came to fighting would have redeemed a thousand such vagaries. I have had private letters from Bombay from a party who heard his deeds narrated, and his personal gallantry appears to have been of the *Cœur de Lion* school. From centre to right, from right to left, wherever danger was the thickest, there was the noble fellow inspiring his troops, his example and his voice were as thousands to the rescue; half-beaten men were in an instant giants refreshed, and rolled back the tide that was momentarily threatening to overwhelm them. Look at his dispatch and you will find him narrating how troops actually retiring as their leaders fell, charged and charged again as they saw a British Officer place himself at their head. Napier was himself the man who thus reanimated their spirits, renewed their arms, and eventually achieved a victory which the history of India cannot parallel. Our force was not more than twenty-eight hundred, the Enemy as many thousand; of these five thousand were put *hors de combat*. There is very little doubt that we shall now keep possession of Scinde,

and, what all our acquisitions have not done, it will well pay its expenses, besides securing the uninterrupted navigation of the Indus, on which we never could have relied with safety. Shikarpore would have been an admirable position for us, and we might have had it ceded long ago in satisfaction of tribute by the Ameers of Hyderabad and Khyrpore, who had a joint lien upon it. Lord Auckland's Manifesto about not taking territory beyond the Indus induced him, I believe, to submit the proposition to the Home authorities, and what became of it I know not, probably as it has not been noticed during the Ellenborough administration it was disapproved. But then comes this difficulty. Upon what principle were we acting when we insisted on a strip of land on either side of the Indus ? How could we refuse a compromise by which we were to become masters of territory Westward of that river when it was tendered, and insist upon other cession which was resisted to the last, because, as you may be aware, the required strips would have destroyed the Shikargurs, or hunting grounds. This demand of land on the banks of the river has always been talked of as *strips* (and so I have used the word) as if it were a mere *towing path* that the Government insisted upon. How much substantial inland pos-

session was intended I know not, but it must have been something considerable, as the Indus has its periodical overflows as has the Nile. I think it would have been the soundest policy to have closed with the original offer, and established ourselves at Shikarpore, taking it in lieu of what has heretofore been paid for British protection ; at any rate it would have saved the fearful shedding of blood which has taken place : we shall now take more.

But in the mean time there is some ground for fear. Napier's force is ridiculously small, and the Ameers may speedily collect almost as large a force as has been dispersed, indeed there are rumours that they have already done so. The Bombay Government is alive to the necessity of reinforcements, and from that Presidency you will of course have later news by nearly a fortnight. Letters I have received to-day mention that a wing, if not the whole, of the 2nd European Regiment was to start by steam boat on the 18th for Bhooj in Cutch ; that the Company's Cruizer *Coote* was to sail on the 8th with a reinforcement of Sipahis, and that H. M. S. *Nimrod* was off on the 7th for Kurrachee.

All the Afghanistan news that the last month has brought us is told in a few words. Dost Mahomed has left Lahore, where he was for some

time well entertained, for his own country. It is said he has entered into friendly engagements with the Siekhs, but of this of course nothing certain is known. It is said too he will observe them just as long as it suits him, which may be readily believed, and which is likely to be until he joins Akhbar, and feels his power, if his son intends he should ever recover it. Akhbar is just now supreme, and it is rumoured that a letter forwarded by him to Lord Ellenborough contained overtures of friendship ; to this no reply was returned. He sent at the same time a letter to Captain Troup, and returned his horse, in fulfilment of a promise given. Both letters came to Capt. T. who forwarded them to his Lordship unopened. In the west the Barukzyes, of which family Akhbar is one, are again in the ascendant. The Candahar Sirdars whom we expelled in 1839, have regained their capital, and Sufter Jung, a son of the late Shah Soojah, is a prisoner in their hands.

The *Calcutta Star* has lately been publishing the late Major General 'Elphinstone's Journal of events preceding and during the insurrection at Cabul. This is of course one of the most valuable papers that has yet been given to the public connected with our disasters in Afghanistan. It

shows the General's conduct throughout in a much more favourable light than it has hitherto been viewed in, and it affects nothing more than a bare record of facts. I have heard that the General wrote a short paper to Government when on his death-bed, and I have heard its contents, but——

From China we have nothing new, except indeed a fearful fire at Hong Kong, which has not been noticed by any of the Journals. It is nevertheless true, and I have heard that an immense amount of property has been destroyed. Nothing has yet been done about the New Tariff, and all we know is, that Sir H. Pottinger and the Merchants do not pull well together in the matter. The European troops who returned from the Expedition are now leaving this; some four or five ships have taken their departure, and others are leaving daily. Considerable delay has been occasioned by the Ships being supplied with bad provisions, which have been in several instances condemned. The Commissariat is not to be blamed; but the Government is without excuse. It made its contract with each Master to supply every necessary at so much a head, and in the anxiety to get troops (by far the best freight) tenders were made and accepted at Rs. 55. This was to include every store, and when you consider

that the voyage must be calculated at 5 months, indeed I believe the terms were twenty weeks' provisions, you will see, and the Government must have known, that it was utterly impossible that the thing could be done for the money. What has been the consequence ? Bad provisions ! What might have been the consequence had it not been discovered before the vessels went to sea ? • Mutiny ! The men have not forgotten the way they were treated by our Commissariat when in China. The *Queen* was detained some days at Kedgerree on this account ; she lost four men by cholera after leaving Calcutta, and the *John Wickliffe*, just gone to sea, has put over board twelve, with a heavy list of sick. This mortality may be attributed to detention in the river and consequent exposure to the sun, and the manner, in which the troops are crowded together. The Steam Tug Company is barely strong enough to meet ordinary calls, and when there is the slightest run upon their boats the supply is quite unequal to the demand.

The everlasting *Gates*, continue ever and anon to lift up their heads. When we last heard of them they were at Bindrabun, a specially holy spot with the Hindoos, the presiding deity being Krishna himself, as it was here he was incarnate. The great man is at Agra, and you will see by his

last production *in ré* Scinde, that he has not improved in his grammar: there is some talk of his coming down to Calcutta in August, when he might attend with advantage one of the many academies which are supported by this intelligent and charitable community. The Lord of Lollipops would make a capital 'big boy.'

The great news of the day is the Comet! This unexpected visitor made his appearance on the 5th instant, but, like other great personages, he only showed himself to a few on the first evening. It was on the 6th that all eyes were stretched, and mouths agape, at his luminous Excellency, or rather his Excellency's luminous tail, at which O'Connell's would have curled up for very shame, for it was at least  $35^{\circ}$  long. No one knew what to make of it, and in all Calcutta not a soul was ingenious enough to surmise that it was the Aërial carriage. I have no doubt about it myself, but do not think it is Mr. Holtzaffel's. It is travelling something like East but as we are not likely to hear of its arrival at its destination, only the *sky*-entific need be very particular on that score. I don't know much about comets, though I study the *Stars* a good deal, and in my simplicity I thought they carried their tails, like little Bopeep's sheep, behind them. Instead of this the illustrious



stranger travels with his tail before him, brushing his way as he advances ; without *tale auxilio* I suppose he could not get on. It is altogether

High diddle diddle

A heavenly riddle !

and no one to solve it. The enlightened natives only know that it portends something, and that something some disaster ; that they will be roasted alive in a general conflagration, or swept from the face of the earth by the face of the waters—the latter opinion for choice ; indeed the day is fixed, the fifteenth from its first appearance, when the Bay of Bengal is to remove the Sand Heads as far as the muddy heads of Government House, and an inundation is to swamp us to which that of the Nile will be *nihil*. Some talk of the comet portending famine, others pestilence, and not a few Lord Ellenborough's remaining in power. If I might venture a guess, I should say it has some connection with Mr. George Thompson, who was its immediate predecessor with a tale, but which he has not yet unfolded, not having got through his preface, which dedicates his work in the worst fashion of the worst times to the hundred millions of tyranny-trodden wretches it is his kind intention to rescue from the thralldom of the British Government.

In my last letter I had a few words about Mr. Thompson and *La Jeune Bengal*, or the *Chuckerbutty Faction*, so called from a distinguished patriot who presided at the Meeting to which I then alluded.\* The Chuckerbutty Faction continues in full force, and Mr. Thompson is their idol. That gentleman has now been some months in Calcutta, and has made known his object in coming; I have just mentioned it. Either he is labouring under some delusion, or the community of Calcutta is, for their ideas do not assimilate. He has a party about him which represents no body, but which fancifully represents the hundred millions, as aforesaid. They meet, and talk, cheer one another, and separate, and write out their speeches, and get them printed and laughed at.\* In these printed expositions of Chuckerbuttyism, there is more than the violence you might expect from excited ignorance: studied slanders upon the Government and the Civil Service come from the pens of those who are not among the wholly unenlightened, or who ought not to be from the position they hold. What Mr. Thompson may say in the full tide of his eloquence I know not, but in what appears in print he is perfectly harmless. I have heard it said however, that the spoken and the published

speech is not always alike, but I should almost doubt this, as I believe it is written before it is delivered, and this is certainly the safest course for those who cannot trust themselves to speak of the wrongs of their fellowmen ! 'Mr. Thompson's speeches encourage others to speak, and I do not find that he takes occasion to curb their slanderous propensities. On the contrary,' I am sorry to say, if he be correctly reported, he encourages them. I will give you an instance from the papers of this very day. A native had relieved himself by spitting out the usual 'hundred million,' (whose sufferings are so suddenly found oppressive to the Chuckerbutties) a fair proportion of 'venality' and 'corruption,' 'ignoble bondage,' 'free thought crushed,' 'the curse of ages,' and something about a 'demon,' and in the course of his very temperate address had said the corruption of the Police was rather attributable to 'the aristocratic and haughty Civilians' than any thing else. Mr. Thompson followed, and expressed his high gratification at 'the intelligence and sound sense of those who had addressed the meeting ! The speaker, My dear Alfred, had referred to Mr. T. as 'that distinguished visitor, who has appeared on these shores to raise a fallen nation from callous apathy, and ignoble bondage' !!! 'There's my riddle for

you,' as *Master Walter* says. If we could only see through the comet as easily, eh?

But few if any Europeans have enlisted themselves in Mr. Thompson's cause, nor have the principal natives of the place. If the novelty of the thing could not attract, I leave you to guess what it will be in its staleness, and stale it is getting already. You will be at no loss to understand why it is that this Mary Ann Walker style of agitation has excited the contempt of many, and the ridicule of all. Those who best understand the wants of the country, and the wrongs to be redressed, know that no single step is advanced by vilifying the Government, (if Mr. Thompson does not do it his followers do) and that all substantial changes for the better must come from home.

They know, moreover, that this sensitiveness is assumed, is a sham, a humbug, a put on, to be put off when Mr. Thompson transfers his sympathies and services to some other branch of the great family of man, or when he shall represent the crushed Hindoos in the House of Commons, or Lords some of them will have it, or when they shall get tired of their noisy rattle, which ever shall first happen. You will perhaps like to hear, as Mr. Thompson is a travelling Apostle of Liberty,

any where and every where, what the Press says of him. One daily paper is at his service, one says nothing, yet hardly hesitates dislike, and the third condemns the Chuckerbutty Faction without reserve. I take our Weekly Journals worth notice at three. One is indifferent, and two strongly opposed to the senseless agitation that it has been attempted to get up. Yet all have treated him with respect. When I tell you that all these Journals are Liberal in their politics and some Radical, you will understand pretty well what is thought of Mr. Thompson as a public man. Confident in himself and his resources, he has charged the Press with basely pandering to power and striving to crush the poor, because they have not sanctioned the fooleries, but dangerous fooleries, to which he is a party. The Press is driven to self-defence: perhaps you will remember what our old swordsman used to tell us—‘Don’t be in a hurry to attack, you can hit some devilish punishing blows while on the defensive, and make no show about it either.’ Mr. Thompson may find this out. ‘

You will be amused when I tell you that Dwarkanauth Tagore, the lion of two countries, the favoured guest of Royalty, has been,——what do you think?—disgraced! expelled his family, repudiated

by kith and kin!—and why? because he visited Europe, and eat and drank with her people! This would have been incredible as a prophecy, but it is fact. What do you think the Mary Ann Walkers have had the impudence to say? That not for his travelling has he been proscribed, but because he spoke in terms of high admiration of the British rule in India at the Mansion House, and when addressing a letter to the Directors! Mr. Thompson was Dwarkanauth's fellow traveller; he came here at his invitation, he knew what Dwarkanauth had said; to me it is a little singular that there should have been any sympathy between them. Of course it is impossible that Dwarkanauth should countenance the proceedings of the Chuckerbutties.

I have written a good deal about the set, but my excuse is, that they are lions just now,—or something else in lions' skins; at any rate, they roar prodigiously—or bray. If they speak their minds, why should not I?

Leaving the political, if seditious ranting by any license may be so called, I may say a few words about Mercantile matters, or rather one matter which has been prominently before the public. At the time of the failure of Messrs. Gilmore and Co., there were various rumours about

their transactions with the Union Bank, which were not creditable to either establishment. A Committee of Enquiry, composed of Bank Shareholders, was appointed, and their report has just been published. It discloses what one of the members calls fraud in effect, if not in intention, on the part of the house, and the most extraordinary way of doing business on the part of the Bank, by which they might as readily have lost £500,000 as £50,000, which latter sum is as nearly as possible the penalty they have paid for conducting a pawnbroker's business on 'good faith', that is, advancing money on goods sometimes not in their possession at all, and at others nominally so, but under the entire control of the pledgers. Goods pledged never reached them, and those that reached them were removed. Anything more lax and reprehensible never was made public; but the practice is on all hands denounced, and will, it is to be hoped, never be renewed. The actual loss to the Bank is nothing, but it has naturally shaken to some extent the public confidence. The searching investigation that has taken place, the exposure made, and the reception that the Committee's Report met with, will go very far towards redeeming its character, indeed raising it higher than it has ever been, for this pernicious system has pre-

vailed almost from the time the Bank was established.

I can but mention three or four other matters I had noted for brief comment. The Gough entertainment, which was to come off the evening on which I wrote my last letter, fulfilled all that I anticipated of it. It was really a brilliant affair; not fewer than 750 persons met in the Town Hall which was superbly fitted up for the occasion. Sir Lawrence Peel was the President, and after supper came the toasts of the evening, excellently well given, and as well responded to by the gallant old General and the Honorable Capt. Grey, of the *Endymion*. It is now said that Sir Hugh succeeds Sir Jasper Nicholls as Commander-in-Chief, in August next, but I believe it is more likely to be in October.

Generals Pollock, Nott, and Sale, are to meet the Governor General at Agra about the 6th of April, when there is to be another *tumasha*, and the G. C. B's are to be installed; but as there is no G. C. B. to instal them, I can't say how it is to be managed.

Baboo Mooty Lall Seal, one of our wealthiest Natives, but no Chuckerbutty, has established another School in rivalry of the Hindoo College. It is to educate 500 boys with the view of preparing



them for Government employ. He has entrusted the management entirely to the heads of St. Xavier's College, the very best auxiliaries in any educational undertaking ; so you see that if there are some who chatter, there are others who act.

‘ My task is done,’ my dear Alfred, for the present dispatch, and I shall ever remain, (unless the next mail disappoint me of a letter ‘from you,)

Yours faithfully,

AN IDLER.

---

MY DEAR ALFRED,

*Calcutta, April 19, 1843.*

When I wrote you on the 18th of last month much anxiety was felt by all, and dread by some, about Napier and his gallant force in Scinde : you will remember how disproportioned it was to the work it was likely to have on hand after the heat-ther was once on fire.

We remained in a state of uncertainty, knowing only that reinforcements were being sent, and hearing rumours of disasters befalling a portion of them, until four days ago. On the 14th instant, we received intelligence from Bombay of another great victory gained by Sir Charles.

Reinforced by the arrival of a detachment from Sukkur, which reached his camp on the 23d March, he marched out the following morning to meet the enemy, who were strongly posted about four miles from Hydrabad. Their force amounted to 20,000 men, his to 6,000. The battle was a repetition of the former one, gallant fighting on both sides, and

complete discomfiture of the Beloochees; the General again in the thick of it, himself cheering the gallant 22d to their final charge, and coming off unscathed. Our casualties amounted to two officers killed (Captain C. Garrett 9th Bengal Cavalry and Lieutenant Smith 1st Troop Bombay Artillery) and 9 wounded, and 29 men killed and 230 wounded. The estimate of the Enemy's loss is 600 killed and 2,000 wounded. It is not necessary that I should here give you any further details; you will find them in the Military Department of the Journal in which I write; but I cannot deny myself the pleasure of transcribing Napier's written address to his men before taking them into action:—

“Sepoys! you fought well on the 17th ultimo. The enemy had 22,000 in the field, and you were only 2,700. We had 10 guns, the enemy had 11. We are to march to Ullyar-ka-Taudee on the 24th. We shall be 6,000, the enemy only 15,000, and these, men that you have already beaten. We shall have 18 pieces of cannon, and the enemy's guns are but few and bad ones. Do your duty and show yourselves as brave as you did on the 17th. Keep shoulder to shoulder in the ranks, close and firm, and aim at your enemy's knees, and if you do this no enemy can either stand before your bayonets or bear your fire. I have nothing more to say. Do this, and another glorious victory will be ours.”

Another glorious victory was theirs ! glorious, mind you, to the soldier. We have yet to learn the glory of the policy which has led to this war beyond the Indus, with 'Peace in Asia,' to be maintained at all cost, ringing in our ears.

We must now turn to Lord Ellenborough and his doings after hearing of the battle of Meeanee. The following was his Lordship's Notification :—

*Political Department ; Agra, the 13th March.*—The Governor General is pleased to appoint Major General Sir Charles Napier, K. C. B., Governor of the Province of Scinde.

---

No. 2

The Governor General is pleased to direct, that all Acts of Parliament for the abolition of Slavery and for the suppression of the Slave Trade, shall have full force and effect in every part of Scinde, which now is, or hereafter may be, occupied by the British army.

The Governor of Scinde will take such measure as to His Excellency may appear best calculated to carry the order into effect, and to make it known to the people.

---

No. 3

The Governor General is pleased to direct the immediate and total abolition of all Duties of Transit in every part of Scinde, which now is, or hereafter may be, occupied by the army.

The navigation of the Indus is free to all nations.

By order of the Right Hon'ble the Governor General of India,

You will say this is remarkably cool, and I verily believe Lord Ellenborough is the only man living who would have penned such a document. Imprudent it is to a degree, for I ask you if it does not disclose this fact, that the Government *had made up its mind to take possession of Scinde*, and whether it would not have been much better *that* should have been kept dark, while it is pretended we were driven to arms by an act of treachery, which by the bye was no treachery at all, for, as you will have read, Major Outram was warned of the attack that was to be made upon him. It is pretended, I say, that we had nothing in view beyond enforcing the penalty we had imposed, for correspondence said to have been carried on by somebody with somebody hostile to our Government. Does it not rather look as if the penalty was imposed at the last hour in the earnest hope it would be resisted—the treaty, to the astonishment and regret of Government, having been consented to. It is resisted; instead of waiting to be attacked the Chiefs attack, are defeated, and Scinde from end to end is appropriated for ever by the British Government! No proposition you will observe, ‘Will you pay now?’ but, ‘You would not pay when you were asked, and your country’

is now the penalty we exact.' This is certainly acting up to

The good old rule, the simple plan,  
That they should take who have the power,  
And they should keep who can.

It is exactly the principle of orderly appropriation exhibited by 'Fighting Atty' in *Paul Clifford*, (the associate then, as now the road-felony patron and protector of 'Long Ned,') who says or sings—

" Rise at six—dine at two  
Rob your man without ado,"

Will the Duke of Wellington, think you, prove this appropriation consistent with his friend's determination to keep within the limits Nature seems to have assigned for our Empire? It will certainly not be more difficult than his Grace's self-imposed task of which we read in the last Mail, to justify all that the Governor General had said and done since his unfortunate appointment to the government of this country. Nothing was ever more monstrous in a man in Lord Ellenborough's position, than the language he holds on this occasion. I refer now to his Notification of the 5th March, and which reached you by the last Mail (as indeed, from Bombay will the later one of the 13th.) Having announced the defeat of the

Beloochees, he proceeds, ‘*Thus* has victory placed at the disposal of the British Government, the country on both banks of the Indus from Sukkur to the Sea, with the exception of such portions thereof as may belong to Meer Ali Morad of Khyrpore, and to any other of the Ameers who may have remained faithful to his engagements.’ Good God! where is the precedent for this? The precedent might be found, but where the justice? Were we fighting with the Scindians, the people of the country? No, with the Beloochees, soldiers of men, the Talpoory Chiefs, who themselves have been in adverse possession much under a century, and oppressing a people who had no power to resist. ‘The Governor General cannot forgive a treacherous attack upon a representative of the British Government, nor can he forgive hostile aggression prepared by those who were in the act of signing a treaty.’ A previous paragraph tells us that the Treaty was signed; let us take it so, and that the penalty had been submitted to, that there was treachery and aggression. In the name of Heaven, must punishment necessarily extend to forfeiture and lasting confiscation! Could they find no middle course who were anxious for peace, and who would on no account transgress the limits assigned by na-

ture! Would it not have been punishment on the guilty to dispossess them of what they had never rightfully held, a power which they had never exercised with mercy or justice. If we find a ruler in possession of a country, and desire to enter into a treaty with him, we are not bound to examine into his title: if the treaty be broken, and war thereupon ensue, he may be at our disposal, but we can acquire no title to what he has wrongfully held: a rightful title was in abeyance, and it revives. We punish the wrong-doer for his offence to us, but we have no right to appropriate what belongs to another. Thus it was with the Talpoory Chiefs. A Tory Lord seizes upon the whole of Scinde because it is necessary, as he says, to punish them! I will instance to you a case parallel, except in its injustice, and tell you how a Whig Lord managed matters, recognizing, as you will see, the principle I have alluded to.

During Lord William Bentinck's rule the Rajah of Coorg took it into his head that he was able to resist the British Power and set us at defiance. As a matter of course he was deposed; and what then? Did the Government consider it had any right to annex his possessions to our own? No, Lord William Bentinck knew better, and that it could only be done with the consent of the people.



He therefore assumed what the Scotch Presbyterians term, an harmonious <sup>o</sup>call. I say assumed, and this is enough for my purpose, since it recognises the right that a people have to be heard on the question of their independence.

You will observe I do not assert for a moment that the Scindians will not be better off under our rule than under that of the Ameers; they had laid waste the country, crushed the energies of the people, towns were depopulated, and what should have been a garden of plenty, was a solitude and a desert. I simply say the off-hand way in which it has been seized is utterly unjustifiable, and that if we desired what I believe will be a valuable acquisition to our territories, we should at least have had decency to secure it with regard to forms. That it should have been so seized by Lord Ellenborough, after his peace and plenty proclamations, is the last small inconsistency of this great man. I shall take the liberty of borrowing from myself when writing on this subject on the arrival of the intelligence that Scinde was by a stroke of the pen made 'a British Province.'

'Ellenborough has followed the example of Napier, and made short work of Scinde. He has settled the appropriation of the country in about fifteen lines. The towers of Hyderabad look down

on the course-strewn banks of the Fallalie, and Scinde is ours. 'Brevity is the soul of wit, so vote for Larkins.' Brevity is the soul of the Governor General, though not exactly of Law, so—Napier is Governor. There is an air of ease about all his Lordship does which is perfectly charming. He opens his mouth and takes in an Empire as if it were an oyster, and promises eternal peace and happiness to the country of his adoption, as if he were merely giving a note of hand at a month. 'Sincerely attached to peace for the sake of the benefits it confers upon the people,' and 'resolved that peace shall be observed,' he playfully imposes on his neighbours a penalty that he knows won't be paid, orders that it shall be fought for, takes it out in territory, and in return, with a generosity that belongs to all great minds, relieves a conquered people from all transit duties! It is difficult to believe that such a man should ever be wrong, and quite painful when we find him out to be so. In this instance, however, Lord Ellenborough has made a mistake; he has shown no title to what he has disposed of. There is no recital in his deed of gift how he came possessed, or that he ever was so, while there is his positive declaration that he never would be. He, as it were, stops a gentleman's carriage on the high road,

knocks the coachman off the box, puts up his own, and coolly tells him to drive on! This may be called a Political lark! It is superior, and in a higher walk, to anything Waterford ever accomplished.'

I may dispose of his Lordship for the present month by telling you that he went through the ceremony of investing Pollock and Nott with their G. C. Bships at Agra with great pomp, that he wore a fanciful costume at which every body laughed, and made a speech which every body who read it thought a capital hoax, so you will have a very good idea of what it was like.

From Afghanistan the news is, that the son of Meer Waez is on the throne of Cabool, that Akhbar Khan has fallen into disrepute, and that two attempts have been made upon his life, the last at Lughman, where (or at Jellalabad) he is at the head of a large body of troops ready to meet his father the Deacon, I mean the Dost, of whose progress we have heard nothing since he left Lahore, but that he has been allowed £70 per day by the Maharaja to defray his expenses. I think there is nothing in the rumour that Meer Waez is on the throne; I believe it more likely that its present occupant is Zeman Khan, a cousin of Akhbar's, and the rightful heir, if the Barukzye family is to

prevail, as the son of Dost Mahomed's elder brother.

A letter from Loodianah, of March 23d, mentions that Colonel Stoddart and Captain Conolly who were reported murdered by the miscreant of Bokhara still survive, and that instead of these officers, the men publicly executed, as by former report, were a Greek interpreter and a slave, who were confined in the same well. The authority for this is a Jew at Loodianah, who states that he has heard it from his brother, resident at Bokhara, and offers for a sufficient reward to convey a letter to the prisoners, and return with an answer in five months. This story I believe, though the details concerning their execution and their determination not to forswear their creed, were very circumstantial, and looked like truth. It certainly ought to be enquired into, for though Conolly acted in opposition to Lord Auckland's desire in proceeding to Kokan, and Stoddart most madly provoked the Mussulmans, perhaps I may say insulted the whole Oosbeck nation, it is horrible to reflect on the barbarities to which they have been subjected, and of which they may yet be living victims. Attempts were made to procure the release of Stoddart through Persian and Afghan agency, but they failed. They ought to be

resumed, or why not a direct offer to ransom them, if we are neither inclined to that course nor to terrify their keeper. It certainly behoves the Government to ascertain whether they are really alive or dead, and if the former to rescue them. I think it most probable that they are still alive, and kept *as worth so much*.

From China we have heard little: the Emperor has sent Commissioners to Formosa to enquire touching the massacre of our countrymen, and I suppose it will end in some executions, though there are rumours that His Celestial Majesty has not yet had enough of John Bull, and that there is every inclination to resume hostilities. It is not worth while dwelling upon this, for it is rumour only. Sir Henry Pottinger is progressing but slowly with his new Tariff, yet his letters on the subject show him an able, shrewd, and, what is of much importance, firm man.

This quality I assure you was needed in his communications with his own countrymen, to say nothing of the Chinese.

Let me now turn to 'two or three subjects touched upon in my last.

The Comet is gone, but when he took his departure I cannot exactly tell you; suffice it that Calcutta has not been destroyed as was predicted,

nor has the Aërial carriage arrived as promised ; the latter however is still believed in by many, and all look with some curiosity to the application that is to be made to Parliament on the subject. In the mean time we are not dissatisfied with the *Hindustan*. She has done well : she arrived here from Suez on the 23d March, bringing us our letters, etc. twelve hours at least before the Express viâ Bombay made its appearance, and had it not been for a slight accident to her machinery, during the repair of which she was working only one engine, it is said she would have been here two days sooner. It may be interesting to give you her performances. Here they are, between Suez and Calcutta, having beaten the *Atalanta* 36 hours between Suez and Aden :—

“ On her return voyage she ran the distance from Suez to Aden 1,339 miles in 146 hours ; from Aden to Ceylon distance 2,160 miles in 226 hours ; from Ceylon to Madras 525 miles in 59 hours ; from Madras to Calcutta 698 miles in 67 hours, 30 minutes ; total distance 4,730 miles, number of hours  $498\frac{1}{2}$ , detention at Aden, Galle, and Madras to take in Coal 107 hours 40 minutes, making the whole return voyage in 25 days 5 hours ; averaging 9 miles 4-tenths per hour.”

She took her departure on the morning of the 16th, having again been delayed a day by an accident to one of her air-pumps. She carried away 110 passengers! If she should happen to reach Suez so as to enable her passengers and mail to be forwarded by one of the French Steamers from Alexandria, they will anticipate the Bombay Mail, and this is probable.

The news from England by the February mail of the disasters on the English coast was most melancholy—a heavy blow to many in Calcutta. May it be long ere we again hear of such a frightful loss of life. The Parliamentary intelligence was interesting, for though nothing had been done, what was to be the course on the subject of the Afghan Ellenborgian Policy was told us. We are looking with very great interest for the Vote of Thanks debate. We conclude as a matter of course, looking to the strength of the Ministry, that his Lordship will be included; but we want many matters cleared up. If the Iron Duke keep his word, of course we shall not be disappointed.

The London Journals have written a quantity of rubbishing twaddle about the excesses committed by our troops, on their revisit to Cabool, and not been very particular about sticking to the truth. All the story about the women and children mas-

sacred at Istaliff is pure fudge ; they were specially cared for and protected, and so far from it being even a massacre of defenceless men, the villains were well prepared, and fought at every advantage. And then the drivelling nonsense about the destruction of the Cabool bazaar ! It is enough to make one sick to hear these humanity-mongers ,

‘ Talk so like a waiting-gentlewoman.’

What less could be done when at that bazaar were exposed in savage and malignant triumph the remains of the murdered Envoy and the unfortunate Trevor ? To have left one brick upon another would have been a disgrace. Where was their special triumph, it was right should be our marked visitation. These gentlemen would have had Afghans from generation to generation point to the spot where the stabbed body and hacked limbs of the representative of Britain at the Court of Cabool were hung up in mockery. Thank God they cannot do that now ! As long as the memory of the bloody deed survives, so will the retribution taken.

Your London papers will perhaps allow the Press here to speak a little plainly. Some of them, improving on Hobhouse’s estimate, abuse the Journals of India in rounder terms, and one fellow has called its conductors ‘ ruffians.’ Their general



respectability will enable them to laugh at this, instead of retorting : the creature who penned the coarseness to which I allude may not be a ruffian, but he must be a very despicable specimen of a man, and so I leave him.

I told you in my last letter that the Chucker-buttty Faction was in full force : it has ceased to be. Government has no longer to go to bed dreading lest it should wake in the morning with its throat cut. I told you the Hindoo levellers had one organ among the Journals : it could not uphold them ; the others put them down. Mr. George Thompson has turned his back upon them, and gone over from the talkee talkee club to the sleepy sleepy Society of Landholders—quite another set—men, not boys, intelligent and active men when they are awake, but they put on their night caps nearly three years ago, and would I fancy have slept three more had not Mr. T. taken hold of their top-knots and given them a shake. They jumped up well ashamed of themselves, and promise to make up lee-way.

I told you Mr. Thompson had thrown down the gauntlet to the press, and that it had been taken up. Mr. T. came forward, and in a letter to the Editor of the *Calcutta Star* distinctly disavowed the opinions that had been ascribed to him, and

the language he was reported to have uttered of, and concerning, those Journals which had treated the faction according to its desert. This was satisfactory, and *that* matter was disposed of.

At a meeting some short time after, when he suggested the establishment of a 'British India Society' here, he stated plainly that many had fallen away, frightened at the task before them, even before it was commenced—the task of redeeming, regenerating, and disenthraling their country. In plain language, they had flared up and gone out. It was not perhaps to be expected that Mr. T. should confess he had been in error, but I think he must have felt it; at any rate he has acted as if he knew it. I gave you some specimens last month of the language uttered in his presence, and I told you he rose immediately after the speaker, and warmly commended the intelligence and sound sense of those who had addressed the meeting. I do not think he will do this again: at any rate it is only just, since I censured strongly, to say that he emphatically repudiates the language that was the characteristic of the Chuckerbutties, who, strange to say, had no corporate existence until after his arrival.

Well, then, as the matter now stands the noisy, big-worded body of do-nothings' is out of the field, to be replaced by a temperate constitutional Society which proposes to consider in what way it may best serve the country. To this there can be no objection, for though I believe its members will do very little towards mending matters, they will very much improve themselves. That 'the Society will last would be a dream, but there is no reason why its members should not be allowed to go to sleep in peace, as did the elderly gentlemen to whom I have already alluded. Of this I am as satisfied as I am of my own existence, that all improvement in the Government of this country must, and will, originate in its European population ; that the Natives are helpless in their want of energy : there are no doubt many many exceptions, but this is the character of the people.

There is a Native meeting just now at the Town Hall, to address a vote of thanks to Mr. Sullivan, for calling the attention of the Court of Proprietors in December last to that clause in the last Charter which declares that neither colour, caste nor creed shall disqualify a person from holding any appointment under Government. I put down my pen to go over and see what sort of an assemblage it is ;

but I shall understand little of what goes on, for of course the proceedings will be in the vernacular.  
 ..... I resume my pen.

I found some forty or fifty persons assembled, exclusive of some fifteen or twenty little boys ; but when I left, (in an hour,) there must have been I should think 150 people in the Hall. I don't think there were more than two or three Europeans besides the worthy Sheriff and his Deputy ; of these Mr. Thompson was one, and I believe he was to address the meeting, but after hearing one gentleman read a long paper, and seeing another unroll a longer one, I thought it better to return to my work, as there then appeared no probability of the affair being concluded for some hours. There was a strong smack of Chuckerbuttyism about the address I heard, some harmless generalities with which no one would quarrel, and one or two assertions with which all would agree. The influential Natives of Calcutta were not present. Why ? If we must conclude anything it will be that they probably think the Government under the last two administrations, I mean those of Bentinck and Auckland, has shown every disposition to advance the Natives as far, and as fast, as their just claims merit. The reader of the essay to which I listened was one of those who are impressed with the idea

that the Mahomedan Government was a blessing compared with ours, and he averred that ‘the disciples of Christ must bow their heads to the followers of the Prophet!’—this is almost to a word what he said, though I apprehend not exactly what he meant. But fine writing is the weakness of Natives who do patriotic essays.

I confess the whole affair as far as I saw struck me as a farce. A gentleman got up and read from a paper put into his hand the first resolution, and sat down without having a syllable to say, good, bad or indifferent; then came the seconder with his written address, and excellently well he read it; then a gentleman who could barely read English got through the second resolution, that ‘The following address be adopted,’ and Mr. Thompson kindly volunteered to read it to the Meeting;—where it was written, of course I cannot guess; then the seconder of the address produced a fearful roll of paper which he was proceeding to read, when, as I have said, I came away.

I expected, and who would not have done the same, that the proceedings of the Meeting would be conducted in a Native language. It should have been so. It was to all intents and purposes a Native Meeting, and instead of readers there

might then have been speakers ; and instead of one in ten, probably twenty, having some very indefinite idea of what was going on, and what they were to vote about, all would have understood these rather important points.

But enough on this subject : let me notice the two or three other mems. I made when I sat down.

The late Sir William Macnaghten's remains, which his widow is said to have paid largely to secure, are daily expected in Calcutta, if indeed they have not arrived at this present time of writing. It is intended to give them burial here, and it is said the funeral will be private. It has been suggested that it would have been better had Bombay been selected, since he was Governor elect of that Presidency at the time of his death. At Bombay, too, they have determined on a monument to the memory of the brave men who fell in Afghanistan ; here we have done nothing of the kind, though it has been talked about in the provinces. About twenty guns, most of them I believe brass, have recently arrived at Ferözepore from Peshawur, in charge of Major Lane, C. B., Commissary of Ordnance to General Pollock's Force. They would make a better column than Lord E. has ordered from the wretched affairs captured in

Scinde, but perhaps it would be as well *not* to have an Afghan Column. A tribute however to the slain is another affair. In Bombay they will have one ; in Calcutta, as far as present appearances go, they will not.

From grave to gay : a word about our Theatre, and only a word ; I mention it because I have before given you some particulars concerning the Drama in Calcutta.

The Management is changed : the House was sold, bought by a lady formerly on the boards here as a member of a French Company, and re-opens on the 21st inst. The Company is not so strong as it was, but perhaps sufficiently strong for success with a Theatre-loving community. One of the best actors I ever saw on any boards, as a versatile genius, has just taken his departure by the *Hindostan*. He was the manager of the *Sans Souci* from its opening night to its sale.

I must break off :—two or three matters remained for brief comment, but I have not time even to name them ; you may say, and if you do it will only be the truth, that I am always in a hurry when writing my letters. I grant it vulgar, in deference to that authority which says a gentleman is never in a hurry ; but if gentility has

its law, necessity is known to have none; and my necessity' generally \*is to write a long letter in a very short time. So has it been to-day, yet I have always a second left to subscribe myself,

Yours faithfully,

AN IDLER.

---



MY DEAR MACKENZIE,

*Calcutta, May 8th, 1834.*

The Mail has come upon us rapidly ; it is not twenty days since I dispatched my last to Alfred : if therefore I have less to say than usual, you will be pleased to make allowances.

The events of a month might be crowded into a week, but they have not been ; the events of the three weeks are meagre enough, and may be disposed of in an hour or two. Before turning to them, however, I shall say a few words about your last London news.

We were prepared for the votes of thanks, but not exactly as they were worded nor as they passed. We thought Wellington and Peel would have had the courage to go for the whole, and not be content with a part ; that after the Duke's brava do they would have claimed thanks for Lord Ellenborough in other language than if he had been, as one of your papers says, (I think the *Examiner*) Commissary General. We thought, too,

there would have been some division on the subject. Who could contemplate the gross inconsistency of men volunteering their opinions and then avoiding the 'invidious position' they would be in by supporting them with their votes! The Whigs as a party were always a cowardly set; if they had not been they would have retained office up to the present day. Lord John Russell and his friends had better have held their tongues, for their bark and no bite, their being 'willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike,' coupled with the qualified vote to Lord E. looks astonishingly like a compromise, and we think here that the terms were—no opposition to the vote, and all opposition to Roebuck's motion. I see no allusion to this in the papers, but it seems difficult to account for the course pursued in any other way. You are very well aware that when the Session began a great stand was to be made against this vote. To what then are we to attribute its being allowed to pass without a division? If you say to the relative strength of the parties, that was known before. If to the very qualified language employed you have no case, for Lord Ellenborough might as well have been thanked for the abolishment of Bartholomew fair as for anything he did towards our successes in Afghanistan. The

Ministry themselves would appear to be pretty much of this opinion : look at the wording of the Resolution :—

‘ Resolved—That the thanks of this House be given to the Right Hon. Lord Ellenborough, Governor-General of the British possessions in the East Indies, for the ability and judgment with which the resources of the British empire in India *have been applied* in support of the Military operations in Afghanistan.’

You will no doubt have observed the entire absence of all intimation that these resources were applied by the nobleman who is thanked. As the facts are, and as the Blue Book shows, these resources were applied by Lord Auckland ; but a Tory Minister being in power his successor receives the reward. I wonder Charles Buller did not point out the laudable respect for facts which prevented the Cabinet committing itself to an untruth. If an untruth be told, you will see it is only by implication, which must be taken to be great morality in a political party. But it is extraordinary that no man in the House, should have said, ‘ You do not assert that these resources were applied by Lord Ellenborough, do you mean to imply that they were ? If so, state when, where and how ? ’ It is impossible the when, where,

and how, could have been told, because Lord Ellenborough's services in the cause were confined to sending carriage on two different occasions; on the first to bring Pollock's force back, on the second to assist it in going forward; the last was five months after he had been in the country, and it arrived too late! By the bye, he did something else, he sent up some rockets that would not go off.

I am not surprised the Ministry shrunk from declaring that Lord Ellenborough did any thing; I am not surprised that they should ask a vote of thanks; but I am surprised that this implication of ability and judgment should not have been exposed.

You will perhaps think this subject a little stale; it is so, but it is the last news you have sent us.

It would be difficult to imagine anything more discreditable to all parties concerned than this vote. The Government has the palliation that it could not avoid the proposition without casting the most intelligible censure on its nominee, and perhaps that was too much to expect. It is discreditable to the Governor-General, because such an equivocal proposition was never before put forward on behalf of any public man, and it is discreditable to all who supported it, because utterly unwarrant-

ed by facts. Upon the Whigs it is a blot, because it was a compromise—if not with Peel it was a compromise with conscience;—we will say it should not be, but we will not oppose it, and the inducement to this compromise can but have been the hope of winning Ministerial influence to the defeat of a Committee of Enquiry into their own policy. Lord Ellenborough was exalted and Lord Auckland sacrificed that the real responsibility of our Afghan interference might remain unknown. Lord Auckland bears it, and he is a patient man. His Government would have been one of peace and non-interference; all his principles and inclinations were that way, and the world must now bide its time for the real history of the circumstances under which we marched an army across the Indus.

It is unnecessary to say a word in defence of Lord Auckland. There is not a point on which he is vulnerable; party spirit may malign him, but the calm enquirer who acquaints himself with facts, will find him above reproach. The policy was outlined at home, and I believe it would have been much the same had the Tories been in power instead of the Whigs. Be that as it may, to throw the responsibility of it upon Lord A. is monstrous. I doubt whether he has a single friend who does not regret that the motion for a com-

mittee was lost. To blame him for the disasters that occurred is more monstrous. Not a syllable has been disclosed that makes him in the remotest degree responsible. The strongest point that can be urged against him is, that he appointed General Elphinstone, a distinguished soldier, but a man passed his day. It has been said his Lordship was told this, and that he was not fit for the command. It may be so, but there is much excuse for the appointment in Elphinstone's position and his services, and not to have named him might have been to bring down another kind of attack.

Had his Lordship failed in the trying hour, had he vacillated and shown himself unequal to the emergency, then indeed there might have been a mark set against his name. It was not so. He faced our misfortunes with the nerve of a man, and prepared to retrieve them with the vigour of a statesman. Never anything more untrue was uttered, in the spirit in which it was said, than that Lord Ellenborough came and reversed the policy of Lord Auckland. Look in the Blue Book at Lord E.'s first letter to the Commander-in-Chief, and you will find it follow with the strictest fidelity the policy Lord A. had chalked out. That policy was certainly reversed in one sense. Redress was to have been taken as soon as the means

were commensurate ; instead of which a well equipped and powerful force ~~was~~ allowed to remain in spirit-breaking inactivity for months ; fatally would it have been reversed had it not been for the noble conduct of Lord Auckland's Generals. Had there been a line to show that Lord Auckland ever contemplated the retention of the country as well as the recovery of our honour, then indeed there might have been some ground for saying his policy had been reversed, but it is in black and white that on his own responsibility he would never do it. Is it not strange that Peel should declare the policy was reversed, when only last session the man said, with a threat to Lord Palmerston, 'Who contemplated *the abandonment* of Afghanistan? I could tell him. Beware, I say, let the noble Lord beware of indiscriminate reflections upon those now in office.' And this was based on Lord Auckland's order that if the force could not make itself safe at Jellalabad, it was to retire on Peshawur and wait further orders. Lo, what have we from the same lips ! A declaration that Afghanistan was to be abandoned, and a declaration that the abandonment is a reversal of that policy ! But it may be said, Peel meant an abandonment by Lord Auckland without striking a blow. That such was intended is notoriously

untrue, and it is contradicted by the language used. 'Lord Ellenborough orders a withdrawal within the Indus! not a syllable about further orders! and that my dear Mackenzie is, what?—only being a little 'over cautious!' Party, Party, what does it not do with the justice and honesty of man!

Lord Brougham knew well enough the course that had been decided upon. With what bitter sarcasm he came down on his former friends—'The words of their mouths are as soft as butter, having war in their hearts. Their words are smoother than oil, yet they be very swords.' Pity that he could not have lashed these worthies without committing himself; pity that he could not have cast them off without leaguings with their rivals. How fearfully he laid himself open in this attack: he pinked his adversaries, hit upon hit palpable, but he might have been run through and through, aye as *Hamlet* spitted *Polonius* when he exclaimed, "How now? a RAT?" With *Hamlet* I will only say

For this same lord,  
I do repent.

The Duke of Wellington would appear to have retained Brougham for the defence in the Somnauth Gates' case, and the result is another proof that a



case may be bad enough to break down even such an advocate. I knew lawyers would take either side, and the majority of political men, but I never believed Brougham was the man to carry the practice of his profession into public life. It is impossible that he can look upon this proclamation other than with the most sovereign contempt, and I know the day on which he would have pulled it to pieces bit by bit, and gibbeted its author. It was too much for Peel, and as it would appear even for a party Press. It is difficult to take up a London paper in which it is not ridiculed. The case must be desperate when even the *Standard* abandons it. The *Times* you may possibly remember, alluding to the Duke's promised defence of all that had been said and done, observed, that when he came to direct his consideration to the 'accessories and ornaments' of Lord Ellenborough's Orders he would 'be as much puzzled as the rest of the world already is to account for them by any hypothesis other than that of temporary insanity.' The *Calcutta Star* noticing this, says:—

"The opinion of the Press has been pronounced in England as well as in India, and the 'ruffians' here have had the satisfaction of being supported by the 'gentlemen' there.

It then comments on the line of defence proposed, in an article that not being very long, I shall quote :—

“ But we cannot agree with the *Times* that it is necessary to conclude Lord Ellenborough insane ; it might be as well perhaps that his Lordship’s medical attendant should be directed to report upon his state of mind, and we should not be surprised to find it pronounced ‘ unsettled ’—indeed our astonishment would be if it were not,—but this is a different thing from even temporary insanity, and though it might be charitable to the Governor-General to allow him the benefit to that plea, Justice to India requires that it should not be conceded.

Never more than now has it been imperative to vindicate the law from this growing abuse of a humane exemption from the consequences of guilt. The welfare of society demands it ; criminals of all classes escape under the pretence put forward by their friends that they are not responsible agents. The Game laws being severe, the idle and worthless sport in the public streets ; they can bag a brace of bipeds with less danger than a brace of hares, for when they have brought them down, half the world is ready to cry out—poor creatures they must be insane ! They let their beards grow,

loll out the tongue, dribble or get up a ghastly grin, are tried, commiserated, and made comfortable for the rest of their days.

Insanity is the last resource of detected guilt, and is a tolerably safe one, better than old Weller's 'halibi' by chalks.

The experience of the last few years has not been lost upon the Editor of the *Times*. He is convinced of Lord Ellenborough's guilt; he does not seek to deny it: no, he prefers the safer course, and notifies his intention of pleading for an acquittal on the ground of temporary insanity:—we protest against this plea being received.

The *Times* is well aware that when it reviews Lord Ellenborough's life it will be an easy matter to adduce innumerable passages indicative of a weak mind; that it will be able to collect a host of witnesses intimate with him, who will swear they have often thought he was mad, and it is concluded that these will stand him in good stead when brought to the bar of public opinion. It is hardly possible to doubt that a communication has been made to his Lordship of the course his friends intend to pursue, for we have seen him on several occasions lately adopting the artful dodge to which we have alluded, of shamming Abraham as to the '*mens sana*'. We need only mention one or two of

the latest instances, his squandering his money (never before having been known willingly to part with a pice, a *capital* hit) on the old women at Futchpore Sikree, and his dressing himself up like a merryandrew to represent her Majesty at the late installation.

These tricks must not be allowed to deceive us : his Lordship is not mad. For what he has done he is responsible, and ought to be severely punished, and indeed severity would be real mercy, for having already gone the length of appropriating other people's property there is no knowing where it may end. The *Times* would make out a case for putting him in a mad house ; we should much prefer seeing him in the House of Correction, a mild punishment with reference to his offences, but one of some severity to a man who prides himself on long locks, cocked hats, and gold laced unmentionables, for the hair is cut short, and Apollo himself wouldn't look captivating in the pepper-and-salt of a prison. If we pronounced sentence in this country it would be, that he should be transported to the place from whence he came, and by the authorities there be transferred to the Bridge Street Bridewell, or Coldbath Fields, for twelve months, and thence to the Home Office. This would at once punish him and those

who sent him, accessories before the fact to the offence of obtaining power under false pretences.”

There is a rumour here that his Lordship has been recalled, but no credit is attached to it; neither is it likely, as he took quietly the rebuke from ‘home about the ‘Gates,’ that he will resign earlier than he originally contemplated, and we have always understood that he had no intention of remaining in office the usual time.

The Scinde news will of course have been received with great rejoicing, and only the few will trouble themselves about the justice of our appropriation of the country. I wrote rather fully on this subject last month, and shall not dwell upon it now, but I may notice that you will have found Roebuck a better prophet than Peel. The latter foretold an amicable arrangement, the former that we should be called in and take the lion’s share. He was nearer the mark than the Minister, though he did not quite hit it. We walked in without being called, and took all. Had Roebuck been a little better informed of what was going on he would have guessed the result.

The news from our new Province is, that the Fort of Omercote has fallen into our hands, having been abandoned by the enemy: this was the last

of their strongholds, and Sir C. Napier writes that he does not believe another blow will be struck. We are not accurately informed of the state of the country, I mean as to its tranquillity or otherwise, but the probability is that there will be no disturbance originating with the people. The rule of the Ameers, as I have before said, was a grinding tyranny, and their fall is not likely to be regretted.

Sir Charles appointed three Military men to act as Magistrates and Collectors for the province, and this has been confirmed, since which three young Civilians, Messrs. Riddel, Cocks and Le Bas have been appointed to assist in carrying on the duties.

The Ameers, three of Hyderabad and three of Khyrpore, with five sons and nephews, making with their retinue a party of fifty-one, arrived at Bombay in H. M. Ship *Nimrod* on the 19th ultimo, and our sick and wounded came by the *Semiramis* Steamer on the 25th. There appears to have been a good deal of discussion as to where the prisoners should be kept; for the present they remain at Malabar Point, but are to proceed to the neighbourhood of Poonah. About thirty ladies of their Zenanahs had joined them to share their captivity, and little change I apprehend it will make to them.

The Ameer's were received by Sir George Arthur in Durbar soon after their arrival, and we are told, 'met the utmost respect and attention,' which of course must have been extremely consolatory.

And now leaving this last scene of Lord Ellenborough's exemplification of Peace in Asia, I must inform you of a pretty little affair under, as I may say, his Lordship's nose. On the death of the Rajah of Khytul without issue (which happened the other day) his small territory lapsed to the British Government. Though small, it is to us of much value from its locality, being situated between Hurreanah and Sirhind; its revenue is estimated at about £50,000, and this it is believed might be doubled or trebled by good management. The old lady who was left behind, thought upon the whole it was too good a thing to part with, and having been allowed to take possession resolutely refused to give it up. *Two Companies* were sent to bring her to her senses, when she attacked this imposing force, wounded two officers and beat the party back to their cantonments. Captain Whistler and Lieutenant Farre were the parties who suffered. A force was quickly got together of more than 5000 men, at whom, vulgarly speaking, the Ranee took a long sight, and left them an

empty fort. It is very well known that the whole of the protected Sikh states are disaffected, and would rise to-morrow for all the love they bear us.

From China we have had nothing of greater importance lately than the death of Elepoo, the High Commissioner; we have not heard who is to be his successor.

I mentioned at the conclusion of my last, that the remains of the late Sir William Macnaghten were expected in Calcutta. They arrived, and were interred on the 22d ulto. in the Circular Road Burying Ground. The usual printed intimation was sent round, and a very large concourse of persons attended, many of whom were natives. Europeans of all ranks up to Members of Council joined in paying respect to the memory of this distinguished man. Since then there has been a meeting of his friends to consider the propriety of erecting some lasting testimonial of their regard, and it was agreed to raise a Cenotaph in the New Cathedral, which by the bye, appears to get on but slowly. The resolution to this effect was very carefully worded, and there was an evident desire to avoid the possibility of any discussion on his public acts as Envoy. On such an occasion no doubt unanimity was desirable, but I am persuaded his friends might have gone with safety to



the public on the whole life of the man, and that his brilliant career, though clouded towards its close, would have been held to entitle him to the proudest monument they could bestow.

Another meeting of friends and admirers have presented an address to Mr. C. B. Greenlaw on his long and indefatigable exertions in the cause of Steam Communication with England. I mentioned a call on this subject in my February letter : the subscription for a testimonial has reached about £1100 ; of this £200 are to be devoted to a bust, to be placed in the Metcalfe Hall when completed, and the remainder to the purchase of a service of plate. Mr. Greenlaw in replying to the address, exhibited great good feeling and taste. He was silent about himself, and dwelt on the services of those who had laboured in the good cause with greater opportunity, from their position, of advancing it—Metcalfe, Bentinck, Auckland, the Bishop, the late Sir William Macnaghten, Chairman of the Steam Committee, and others.

I should have mentioned last month that Dickens has taken the alarm at the extensive newspaper piracy of his works, and has fired off a six-and-eight-penny at all the editors. Opinion varies as to whether this is a piracy that is injurious to the ultimate sale of his books ; my own opi-

nion is, that it rather serves than injures them, but he is the most potent judge if not the best, and the decree has gone forth—let there be no more Chuzzlewit. I was reminded of this by an advertisement in to-day's paper of a bodily reprint of the Blue Book,—what do you think of that? Price £1 16s. Lord Ellenborough has no particular reason to be proud of its contents, and I expect we shall have him sending down to the Advocate General to know in whom the copy-right is vested.

I mentioned on a former occasion the investigation that had been made into the affairs between the Union Bank and the late firm of Gilmore and Co. About the same time a correspondence was going on between Mr. J. G. Gordon, the Secretary, and a Mr. O'Hanlon. Mr. G. was formerly a partner in the firm of Messrs. Macintosh and Co. who owed Mr. O'H.'s son some money when they failed many years ago. Mr. O'Hanlon demanded payment of Mr. G., and whatever his meaning may have been, his language amounted to a threat that if the money were not forthcoming some charge would be preferred. It is difficult to know exactly *what* was meant, but this is certain, that Mr. O'Hanlon addressed Mr. G. as a man in his power, who would

do well to avoid exposure by paying the money. Each party published a pamphlet, and the result was that Mr. O'Hanlon, who was a Magistrate, was called upon by the Government to explain.

He denied the supposed attempt to coerce Mr. G. by any threat, and deemed it 'unnecessary to trouble his Honor with a repetition of the details.' The reply from the Secretary to Government was an intimation of his removal from the Bench. The whole of this affair is so mixed up with the hubbub in the Union Bank, (Mr. O'Hanlon having been very creditably opposed to the dangerous system that prevailed, and being supposed to have taken advantage of the opportunity to obtain payment of his son's debt from the Secretary when he was in hot water,) that it is not possible to mention the one without alluding to the other.

The Government took a decided step, and in very strong language ; there are many who think it was not called upon to interfere ; perhaps as many who think the other way, of whom certainly I am one. The strongest point against Mr. O'Hanlon was, that upon his own showing his son's money was paid into the House by a third party, carried to his account, the same being

intimated to him, and that it, went, Heaven knows, with how much more, when the Firm failed.

Now you will say, what possible interest can all this have for an old gentleman who is not such a fool as to keep his money in agency houses or joint stock banks? Perhaps none, but I profess briefly to note the sayings and doings of the place, and this affair of dismissal has been one of the events of the month. It may not interest you to know that the vacant office is worth £1200 per annum, yet I record the fact, and add, that such is the public spirit of Calcutta that there are many, yes, Sir, many, willing to sacrifice their leisure for this pittance. I perhaps might give you an idea who is likely to be the chosen victim, but I must not; so between a military, a legal, a commercial, an official, and some half dozen other candidates not so briefly to be characterized, I shall leave the matter until next month.

On the subject of appointments, I have something else to communicate. The Government has drafted an Act authorising the appointment of Deputy Magistrates in the Mofussil, who are to be uncovenanted servants. Here is a recognition of the 87th clause of the Charter, for advocating the observance of which the meeting was held

to thank Mr. Sullivan, and which I noticed in my last.

I take this to be one of the most valuable Acts proposed for a long time, not because it lets in other than Civil Servants to judicial employ, (the criminal branch of the judicial department) but because magistrates are so imperatively required throughout the country, it being utterly impossible that the present staff, however able, can attend to a tithe of the duty required of them. These new offices are open to the natives of India, and, singularly enough, the fault now complained of is, that it is uncertain whether it lets in any one else, but about this there ought to be no doubt, as admitting the natives of India surely does not exclude others. The number of appointments is unlimited, the patronage is in the Government, and in both respects this is as it should be.

Well, still more about appointments. That very demagogue of change, Lord Ellenborough, has been doing a bit of the useless grand, and altered the designation of our principal political officials. We have now Secretary and Under Secretary of the Home Department, ditto Foreign, and, as has been stated, we may expect to find the Treasurer transmogrified into the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the Marine Board into the

Admiralty. Would to Heaven the man would content himself with these harmless follies.

I was much amused with *Punch's* advertisement of the Somnauth Gates for sale by George Robins. The illustration of 'Brothers and Friends' was capital. If you did not see it turn to the Month's numbers for February and enjoy a laugh, but stop before you break into a hee-haw, or there will be four of you. What do you think is the last we have heard of this trophy? Heard! I may say seen. Why his Lordship has purloined a bit of the trophy, had it reduced to powder, and sent down to the Asiatic Society in a pill-box to ascertain whether it is sandal wood! That's a fact as sure as you are a living man, and if you are among the blessed, your executors may swear to it on my authority. Suppose you to be, as I heartily hope you are, still among the wicked, do send to *Punch* and acquaint him with the incident; let Hood know it, and H. B., and any one else who has a keen relish for the ridiculous. I deeply regret that the report is not out, but I am confidentially informed that the specimen smelt confoundedly of turpentine. If the Gates are really of sandal, I should recommend his Lordship, as there seems no further use for them, to get them ground bodily into powder, have that made into

paste, and be embalmed in the same after death, (or before if he pleases) as the natives anoint themselves with this very preparation. The Gates have earned upwards of £300 in tribute on their way to Agra, and this money might be devoted to payment of the expenses.

The *India* Steamer left Suez on the 29th March, and reached Calcutta on the 1st May, bringing only nineteen or twenty passengers. I hear she is to be laid up for the hot months: she is a comfortable vessel, though slow, and has a most excellent commander, Lieutenant McKeller of the R. N. I hope yet to see him in one of the Oriental Company's boats. Nothing but clippers will do now-a-days, and when we think of that air carriage, shares in steamers fall like a barometer before bad weather, at least would fall if we could but see it once rise. And while you are waiting for an Act of Parliament to travel aloft, it is done here without notice and without parade. We have it on unquestionable authority, to wit a newspaper, that in a late gale a bungalow was taken up 300 feet into the air and set down a mile or two off, with more than the precision, and all the convenience of a short stage. There was one inside, who from the interesting details with which we have been furnished must have been a cool hand,

and should certainly be engaged for the experimental trip of the Aërial.

I want to conclude, but how can I in the month of May without saying a word about the weather. It is delicious ; the thermometer about 89 in a cool dark room, and only blistering if you venture from under a punkah ; but then we have occasional showers, which would be pleasant were it not for the frightful hissing of the rain as it falls on white-hot (I was merely going to say red-hot) roofs and walls.

A party of gentlemen, to make the most of this favourable season, and perhaps to prove that they are hearty young bucks, have determined to carry on our cold weather Reunions through four months of the hot season ! I notice by the advertisement that they meet 'on the Monday nearest the full moon'—you will draw your own inference.

We had unusually severe thunder and lightning last night, but I have heard of no loss of life. It is little more than a week ago, however, that a gentleman in one of the mercantile houses here, a Mr. Aubert, was struck dead while riding near Chinsurah ; his horse was killed at the same moment.

And now having said my say about the weather, with which I might most orthodoxically have com-



menced, what need of more? Yes one little item occurs. By the last Mail we heard that the East India Company had sent out a medal to Dwarkanath Tagore. The day after to-morrow it is to be presented to him at Government House by the Deputy Governor, the Hon. Mr. W. W. Bird, and a public notification to that effect invites the curious. I am not exactly of them, but I propose being among them, that you may learn particulars from your own reporter. Next month will begin a new year of this correspondence, and if neither you nor yours have wearied of it, I shall go on. I affect no more than to touch lightly on the topics of the day, and give something like an opinion upon them. I would not altogether be judged by what I write, because it is always *currente calamo*, and often with imperfect information. Where I err in important matters better authorities will correct me, and in minor ones the understood license of gossip will, I hope, befriend me.

Believe me,

My dear Mackenzie,

\*Yours faithfully,

AN IDLER.

---







954.05/LET/R/2



11943

